

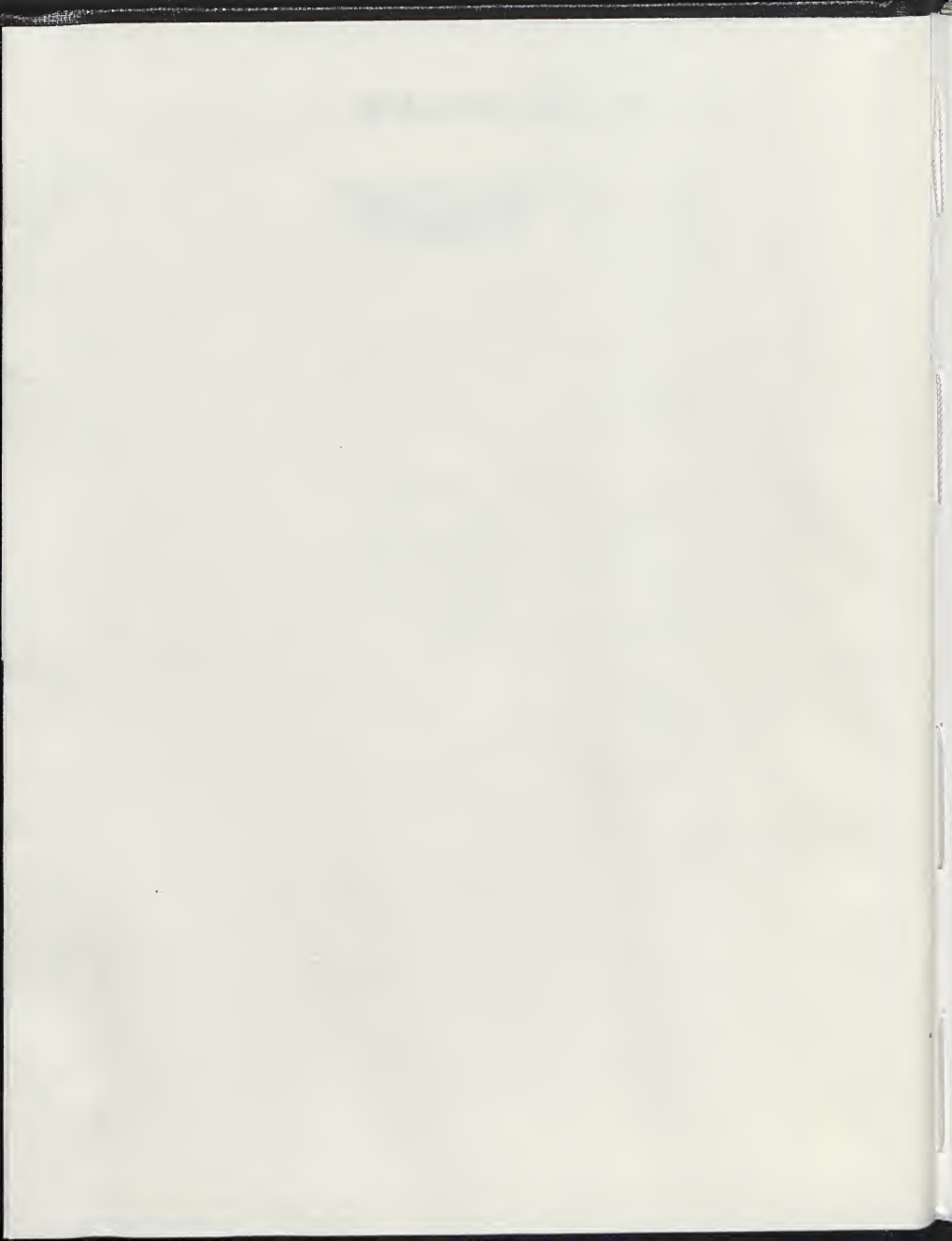
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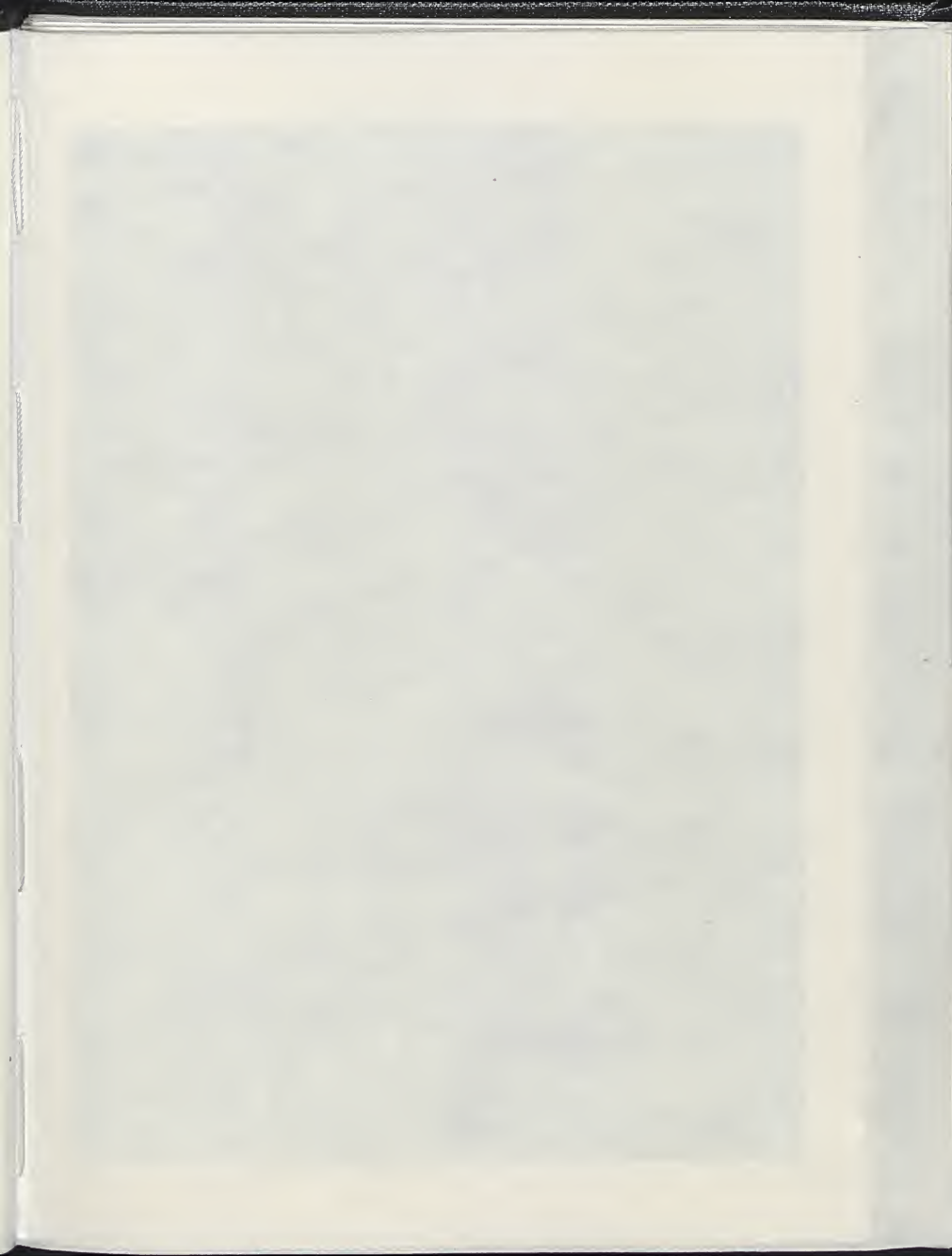
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NOT TO BE CIRCULATED













**The human soul weighs  
three to four ounces.**

Don Delillo  
*Americana*

**Three to Four Ounces**  
**Fall 2000**

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2000

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### The Wounded

Several persons with severe head wounds  
Were brought into Mother Teresa's  
Kalighat home today.

No maggots to pick out,  
But they took pictures  
And were generally in the way.

John Bradley

Sammy

It's like sunshine to me, looking over cotton,  
Speakers loud out of the barn, Granny Ruth,  
Aunt Poochie and the rest of us picking bits  
Off the pig in the cooker, eating a gnat  
With every bite of yams or potato salad.

That's why people in Rocky Hock  
Are so healthy, the youngins don't always have  
Much on the table, but they sure eat some gnats.

We sang "just a swingin" to the tune  
Of your banjo. (Did you think I wouldn't remember). Well,  
I also remember your big teeth and your tanned skin and your gulping,  
Comforting laugh. And that you have a sailor suit on  
In the photograph beside Uncle Preston.

When I took cotton from your Rocky Hock field  
For show and tell in the fourth grade, picking out the cotton seeds  
Made me think of slaves, picking cotton. There were always the carts  
On the backs of the trucks in your yard dripping  
With a virgin harvest.

And so summer air, walking  
down to the wood-wine water of the sound, watching  
For those cotton mouths, the Spanish moss reigning off  
The cedar trees that stain the alluvium of Rocky Hock, I'm eating  
Watermelon to the tune of a breeze only felt on a pebble studded road and  
I think on the acres of time invested in me.

Ginny Bunch

Paeon  
*for allen ginsberg*

When you died I was in high school  
surrounded on all sides by rose covered suburbia  
didn't know who you were didn't care much either  
My poems all rhymed then and won county awards

Four years later I followed your ghost across America  
I sat on your stoop on Montgomery St  
and waited for you to come home to Chinatown  
drunk, with Peter, tripping on the curb and  
yelling obscenities at the moon

I went through your letters and imagined them all strewn out  
across your NY coldwater flat,  
crammed in Calcutta suitcase,  
forgotten in pockets of unwashed jeans  
I wanted to dump out the numbered subnumbered  
boxes all over Stanford's library  
and grin like a madman as I strolled out into the sunshine  
talking to myself about anarchy and whistling  
*holy holy holy*

I looked for you arm in arm with Walt in the supermarket  
thumping cantaloupes  
I couldn't find a sunflower at the train station anywhere  
Your madness was always 4 steps ahead of me around the corner  
and I could taste you sometimes  
but when I opened my eyes you were gone

One night I couldn't sleep, I walked  
past throbbing neon sexshops to City Lights,  
I climbed the stairs to the poetry room  
and picked out a book I couldn't afford and read it there  
in the corner in silent light  
It talked to me about the day you died  
I sat there and I sat there stared out of the window  
cried blinking neon tears  
but didn't care who saw  
Because I knew you sat there, on the windowsill,  
sending a lopsided grin of eternal embrace to me,  
Your wildly lonesome kidmonk

Susanne Hall

## Special China Town Price

Suzanne and I were hiking the streets of San Francisco,  
That golden city with a beat to it  
Trying to find sights to see, but finding  
Things to buy—corners with crates  
Piled high with peeling  
Foreign vegetables spicing the air  
Over bus fumes and the sweaty bodies  
Crowding together, and floating in raw murky waters  
Behind the glass display cases,  
The rotating sushi boats advertised that here,  
Here was authentic Chinese fish—

Wasn't this the romantic scene we expected.

We should have come  
When the city lights were on  
Then the characters would call to us  
Through the foggy dark,  
Signaling all the shining exotica within,  
All the exotica appropriate to the mythic orient allure—

But in the overcast afternoon only the storefronts shone  
And the shopkeepers just laughs at my shoes, my off-balance  
Saunter with pinched feet  
Bound into beauty with their five-inch heels  
They pointed at them first with a smile, then  
To their rack of bowls and fans and chopsticks  
Sold to us at their special Chinatown prices—

special prices for special girls

shaking our heads we fought the streets once more,  
where Suzanne pointed up to the worn red neon sign:

BUDDHA

Right above our heads, bold and bare  
In the overcast day, scroll underneath  
Led to the thin white fluorescent martini glass  
Complete with an olive and swizzle stick design.

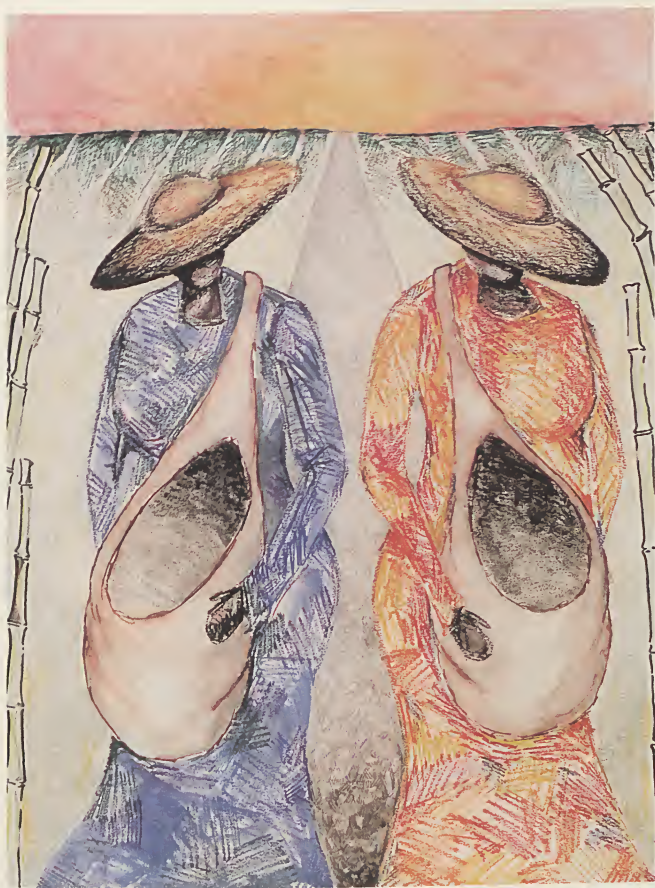
BUDDHA's Bar on Chinatown's main drag—happy hour 6pm.

We took a picture just to make sure.

You can buy it,  
I'll sell it,  
At a special price.

Molly Mattingly





For Rae

Melissa McGhie

## rEvolution

Peacocks wandered the ancient earth,  
and these birds (safe, perhaps bored)  
became creative—  
that plumage fanning out in perfect brilliance.  
Although they couldn't really fly  
under the weight of all that splendor,  
it seemed like a lovely progression—  
Until their world erupted in change  
and hungry men appeared who  
easily ensnared the unwieldy birds.

They smoothly sliced off the knobby heads.

Humans settled the ancient earth,  
and these men (safe, perhaps bored)  
became creative—  
with thoughts spreading out thickly across the wild land.  
Soon, ideas pinioned men firmly to their plots of earth  
which they defended to their deaths,  
and great brains transformed that earth  
into a new and glorious creature.  
The evolution seemed simple and natural—  
until unchecked thoughts felled entire forests  
and softened the frozen dome of the world.  
Suddenly, caught beneath dense layers  
of creation, men could not fly from their broken land.  
They died slowly of hunger and disease.

They had forgotten how to kill a bird  
and pluck it clean.

Susanne Hall



## The Plea

Tie me to the mast, mother;

*Those not leaping overboard  
will be turned into swine  
by the modern woman's sea-witch  
or our own good conscience.*

So tie me to the mast, mother,  
(a simple enough request).

*Outside, the sirens are singing,  
innocent of the watery death in their every intonation.*

Now, tie me to the mast, mother,  
no better time than this mythological present:

*Drunk one Christmas Eve  
my father offered to tell the tale  
of my own messy origins. No virgin birth;  
I had to leave the room.*

Tie me to the mast, mother,  
here's hands and rope a plenty.

*Guildestern and I go banging on Ophelia's tomb  
Lakeview Apartments A8-  
forwarding address:  
our brother Hamlet still lies buried there,  
grave of his o'erhasty marriage.*

Tie me to the mast,  
now hurry, bind me to this ship;  
you're not to lose a son,  
but gain a raving lunatic.

John Bradley



### Seeking the Virgin of Chartres

I know that she is crippled  
Because of the wheelchair,  
Because I saw the guards lay down a ramp for her.  
If she could have moved at all, this would have been  
The moment for a single, insistence of strength,  
The submission of a day's motion as praise:  
If her legs held any power,  
She would have carried her own body forward.

Once inside, interred among the others  
On crutches or in chairs that roll,  
Among those without hair or limbs,  
She is welcomed as the newest  
Citizen of this humble nation in despair.

Has it been fifteen years since a single, jeune belle,  
Heard something vibrate  
In the dark air around this marble virgin?

Even then, it was not a miracle of force,  
Not bread from stone or rediscovered sight.  
Even then it was only words, passed only to a Pope:  
A meaning still known as the suggestion of a rumor.  
An insistent Spanish prayer admits the distance she has traveled  
On the peseta of the ragged man standing with her.

As a child, it was sworn to me  
That the most certain way to avoid lightning  
Is to worship at the husk of a struck-down oak.  
Beneath this cruel canopy of incantation and flashbulbs,  
Is it cruel to think that if this Spanish girl  
Anticipates a miracle of motion,  
She would be better left arguing with a vendor  
Over the price of apples or in a cab in Newark,  
Waiting in traffic for a miracle to emerge?

Anonymous

## Malecón Stacey Triplette

I arrived in Havana three weeks ago with no particular plan. The Courier had sent me to Cancún to do one of those fluffy tourist pieces, and this time, they had even paid for my hotel room. The insignificance of my job suits me perfectly: the Travel page is my safe haven, even if the copy editors ruin it regularly with their nauseatingly pedestrian headlines. When I am at the office the Travel page is serene and blue, foreign words spelled correctly, blocks of text in perfect horizontal harmony. Knowing my habit of lingering extra weeks when on assignment, Marian, my editor, threatened to let Alice have an extra Food page-more minced this and spiced that. Who needs it.

Nevertheless, the idea of flying into Cuba with a questionable Mexican via intrigued me. Cancún serves as a gateway for illegal American tourism to Cuba: for the most part, the authorities on all sides quietly ignore the process. On my last evening a fortyish American wearing a sweat-ringed Hawaiian shirt accosted me while I was having a drink at Señor Frog. Wally thought of himself as a cigar runner; for three years he and his partner (now in jail just outside Havana) had been illegally importing Cuban cigars into the United States.

"It's just beautiful," he said. "The embargo-there's a lot of money out there, and no one's taking advantage of it. Everybody's poor-they steal from the cigar factories, and I buy from them cheap."

What a philanthropic thing to do, I thought. He offered me a hand-rolled recent contraband. I read the label-Romeo y Julieta. "Romantic," I said. Wally proceeded to tell me about pre-teen prostitutes, illegal lobster, cheap rum and voodoo, the best of Cuban culture in his estimation. Feeling somewhat intrigued by the last item in the list, I baited him, thinking snidely that voodoo came from Haiti. "They all believe in it," he said, eyes growing wide in a silly moon-face, "and they'll suck you in, try to cleanse you. They like to cut heads off chickens, make dolls and stuff."

"I was staying at this lady's house," he continued, "and they had a pile of stuff in the corner-leaves and shit, maybe a coconut, I don't know-and they were spitting rum on it. They said it was the god of something or other; I have no idea, and the next thing I know I'm spitting rum on it too, and then they say I'm unclean or something and bring out a turtle. Then the damn thing's on my head, just sitting there, all in its shell, and I see this Bic plastic razor on the table with the bottom part cut off and the blade exposed, and I'm no humanitarian but I feel bad for the little guy, about to get slashed with the safety razor-"

"So you left. Tell me, did they ask you for money before this whole thing started?" I asked, interrupting.



"I only gave them enough to replace the bottle of rum I spit on the floor," he said.

Later that night, I wondered about Wally and his tale of impending turtle-doom; it had to have a grain or two of truth, because he didn't seem like a guy with an imagination. Household gods, cleansing rituals, and primitive religion might make a few good photographs; maybe I could justify a quick trip, just a week or so. Feeling impulsive, I charged the plane ticket to Marian's AmEx and went.

I got Dave's machine when I called to let him know and left a short cryptic message that I knew would make him angry. He hates it when I take my extended vacations, and I knew we would have a fight the next time we talked.

I pushed these thoughts from my mind as the airplane turned and began its descent. Visible for the entire flight, the island slowly grew larger: first muddled and indistinct, then blotches of green over darker green. Carted upon landing toward the small squat building that looked more like a filling station than a terminal, I could see a crowd of people on one side of a fence watching a plane leave for Miami.

At my editor's insistence I temporarily settled in a crumbling hotel in the Vedado-I found it ironic that the district's name meant "forbidden." It was certainly forbidding to me; I felt equally out of place in the large American-style hotels and the unkempt side streets. Even the scientific street signs bewildered me: organized by number and letter, they seemed a pathetic attempt to superimpose order on chaos.

Marian had chosen Vedado because of the University; when I called her upon landing she had a contact for me. Her name was Lázara; a rotund and sensuous motherly figure, she looked utterly beautiful in a long white dress and necklaces of colored plastic beads: blue and clear, yellow and gold, red and white, proudly displayed and brilliant when entwined.

Lázara specialized in religion; she met me outside the department of languages. High and delicate-looking, the building featured broken panels in the outside door and a large dark staircase leading to open balconies: stone on unrelieved dark stone. The only light in the barren hallway came from a wall of mostly broken glass above the main door.

The building was also empty except for the two of us, as most students were "volunteering" in the sugar cane fields during their brief summer recess. Lázara took me to one of the classrooms and carefully settled her bulk into one of the half-desks. We spoke in a mixture of English and Spanish, filling in words for each other where they failed and eventually achieving a lyric nonsense, each speaking primarily in the foreign language and listening for our own. She helped me find one woman to live with, another to wash my clothes, and a place to buy food - all on the black market. I liked her immediately for her merry dark eyes and warm white-toothed smile, her habit of ruffling her hair when she hunted for words, her way of pronouncing my



Driveway

Erin Butler

name Yanet instead of Janet.

She evaded my questions about government and religion, and instead told me about her necklaces. She called them *cuentas*, or accounts: each pattern represented a different saint, and worn in combination they meant protection and blessing.

"Catholic saints?" I asked.

Lázara explained that they came from *Santería*, Yoruba traditions with a Catholic veneer—a slave religion. Influential rather than powerful, each *oricha* fell somewhere between the category of saint and deity. Her story immediately appealed to my love for myth and chaos: blue beads for Yemayá, the guardian of the sea and eternal mother, yellow for her sister Ochún, goddess of love and the river, and red for Ochún's lover Changó, the god of the drum.

That night I wrote in my journal for the first time in weeks, making an entry for each *oricha*, drawing them large and distinct, with shining dark faces and mysterious smiles, the women with ropes of long braided hair. I cast them in my mind and looked through my camera lens for humans to fill the parts. Sometimes I invent the story before I take the photograph; more often I develop the film first and then begin to imagine. I think about the old men on park benches, the street artists, the homeless women, and wonder how they lived the year, the day, even the instant before I trapped them. Like pressed flowers in a well-loved novel, they are frozen and safe and yet only have meaning as I choose to give it.

Lázara's lighthearted tales, passed under a flamboyán in early evening, gradually eroded my uneasiness. A kind of rosy haze entered my mind; I called Marian to say I would be staying another week, then two. She wasn't happy, but she made only vague threats and I felt safe. In Havana I never saw poverty or suffering. I walked alone along the *malecón*, a kind of crumbling seawall, toward old Havana, staring out into the empty harbor; I photographed indolent young men leaning against Communist propaganda, waiting for the *camello*, that horrible hump-backed trailer that passed for a bus. For me the poor souls hanging out the windows of the camel were enjoying the scenery, not gasping for air.

Something had to wake me eventually; as it happened, two things served the purpose of one, each of which alone would have bolted me back into my familiar cynicism. The wry firebrand I negotiated with for kitchen space, Lucrezia, had a twenty-five year old daughter named Liudmila. Young Cuban women, I found, had strange names, exotic and foreign-sounding, made-up in the tide of renovating ideas after the revolution. She asked me to call her Lily; she liked American things.

Lucrezia never talked to me very much, especially not about her family. As far as I knew she and Lily were alone; I never asked. I gave Lily some American music and my tape player, realizing how difficult it would be for the average Cuban to get any kind of luxury item. The Vedado's bright shops and hotels were only for foreigners, Lily told me, like every other good thing in her country. Cubans who



talk to foreigners on the street, she said, even with the best intentions, immediately fall under the suspicion of the ubiquitous military police. Citizens are not permitted to talk to visitors, particularly Americans or members of the press. I was glad that I had presented myself as a student of photography.

Lily worked as a waitress and maid in one of the smaller hotels, but she was not uneducated. She had the equivalent of a bachelor's degree in languages but could make much more money making beds and clearing tables. Times were good now, she said, compared to what they were.

"I'll show you a picture of my mother ten years ago," she said, trying to explain. I looked at the faded photograph, and I could barely recognize Lucrezia in the smiling fleshy woman in a pink housedress, roughly the shape of a mango.

"We were starving eight years ago," she told me plainly, "my sisters and I." The bones of her wrists looked as though I could snap them with the tap of a pencil.

"How did you survive?" I asked, fearing the answer.

"I started working in a hotel, taking food from the restaurant or people's rooms, whatever they didn't eat. We had a little apartment, two rooms, the ceiling falling in, no electricity." Her voice had begun to falter, and I didn't understand why she was telling me this.

"Your place looks so beautiful now," I said.

"Things have gotten better," she mumbled, "but they were worse first. My sisters-Maura and Clara-they saved us, brought in money when we couldn't. All these foreign men, old men, look for young beautiful girls on the malecón-you can make so much money," she explained, hoping I would catch her meaning. I felt angry, ashamed of myself, looking at the beautiful girl telling me this, obviously embarrassed, thinking that she had done something wrong and not me. To me it seemed heroic. She went on to tell me that Clara was in jail for the next two years; a common thing, she said-better to know that than nothing at all. Maura had simply disappeared.

From that day I couldn't see the city the same way. I scowled at every foreigner, and gasped in pity every time I saw a woman poured into vertical-stripe spandex. I wanted to go home and write a letter to the President or find Wally again and tell him what his precious embargo had done. I wondered what Ché Guevarra would do if he were still alive to start another revolution, whether he would sneak ninja-like into Fidel's office and strangle him quietly, or whether he would sit as I did on the malecón and stare into nothing.

Everything looked dirty to me; at the center of it all I wanted to go home, back to Dave and my job, back to my cats and my books, my darkroom and my Lean Cuisine dinners. I had waited so long to call Dave that I felt ashamed to do it now, and as I stood in the orange telephone cabin dialing the numbers, my heart pounded in my ears. He picked up after two rings.

"We didn't think you were coming back," he said, his tone somewhere between joking and surprised.

"It's only been a couple weeks," I said, nervously. "Marian knew where I was."

"You called your editor and not your boyfriend." His voice was cracking; it could have been just the poor connection.

"Are you okay?" I asked. My voice reverberated back at me, and I wanted to answer myself.

"I've been taking good care of Charlotte and Emily," he said, and immediately I knew something was wrong. Dave hates cats, especially mine.

"There's something I have to tell you," he said abruptly, and I felt my blood pressure drop. Please don't let him be seeing someone else, I thought.

"I'm seeing someone new," he said. "You know Alice the Food editor." I couldn't talk after that. My tongue swelled to the size of an iguana and my vocal cords shrank to two transparent grains of sand. I listened to the echo, "Alice the Food editor," and then the silence that followed it. He did not speak, but I knew he was still on the other end when I hung up the phone.

He had not sounded unkind. This was my doing; this was neglect. Two years seemed like a long time to waste but maybe Dave was right to end it. He and I were considerate at our best, apathetic at our worst, but I felt devastated, flooded: if I were in a movie it would have been raining.

After that phone call I felt strange around both Lily and Lázara. They had each shared so much of themselves, but I could not speak, could not find words in any language. I wandered; I took pictures. I followed a woman in a nurse's uniform for more than a kilometer, always at a distance, keeping my eyes trained on her emaciated legs and swollen, delicate, broken-looking ankles. She turned when I took her picture; her face was blank, without any spark of interest or life. I felt lost. I wanted to go home, but I also wanted to stay, thinking that somehow the in-betweeness that I was feeling had to be better than seeing Dave and Alice every day, better than being forced into endurance and finally forgetfulness.

Marian gave me the money for a return ticket without asking questions. My last day broke hot and hazy, and when I woke up with the salt taste of the ocean in my mouth, I decided that I needed a last walk into Havana Vieja. The path along the malecón sweltered, and the sun was so bright that I could see only a few feet in front of me. I heard "psst!" all around me; Lázara had explained that Cuban men whistle at anything more attractive than a pile of innards and I had learned not to take it as a compliment. I had said goodbye to her the day before, and when she hugged me I felt pleasantly lost in her almond-smelling bulk.

I turned inland, down desolate streets unknown to me. Walking in the center of the street in case the balconies overhead decided to fall, I marveled at the close-clinging beauty of peeling paint in tropical colors. I saw very few people at first but

as I walked they began to emerge from their doorways, escaping the heat of mid-morning.

The alley narrowed and then widened; suddenly the street burst into full sunlight, and I covered my eyes. It was almost time to get a cab for the airport, and my pack dug into my shoulders. Sweat dripped down my face as I sat on the curb waiting for a taxi to pass. One, two Cuban taxis rattled by without stopping to take pity: I would have to wait for one of the new white cars licensed to carry foreigners.

Suddenly I saw them. Without knowing at first who it was, I instinctively prepared my lens. The woman was wearing a yellow tank top, the man a red and white striped shirt. They were waiting for something, sitting for the moment on a pile of rubble that had been a wall. She laughed, he smiled - their white teeth glinting through the haze. Their bodies turned toward each other, sensual and familiar, and she raked her slender brown hands through long dark hair glistening with sweat.

Ochún and Changó. The haze became a halo around the figures, covered by their quiet banter, ringing as bells. My hands shaking, I took a photograph, the most important one of my life: I saw an entire island in the faces of this young man and woman, in their smiles I found centuries of forgetfulness.

They transmit a message of survival, of playful inertia that somehow allows them to exist through revolution and disappointment, through crises of faith and lack of devotion. Posing in an ancient way and admiring only each other, the gods of river and thunder will never see the ruin around them. He drums his fingers absently on the wall: a call to arms that only she will hear. Her laugh answers with shards of glass and brilliant particles of color: peeling out and breaking on the ground.

I did not regret that a taxi came a few minutes later; a longer gaze might have been too long. I left Ochún and Changó where I had found them, still guarding the people who came and went.



Our present generation of writers has wallowed in much confusion over which aspects of the writing business contribute to artistry. They have been so overwhelmed by *Catcher on the Rye* and its first person ramblings that they have come to equate a quasi-innocent, formless outpouring of the soul with art. And, on the other hand, many of those writers not given to the effusive "sincerely me" writing have been stylistically influenced by teachers of the Hemingway generation and have come to devote themselves to a brash, trimmed-to-the bone slice of life. Those of the Hemingwayesque persuasion say they favor the sort of ultra-realism in which the author has not "distorted" or "tampered with" life by any sort of manipulation.

That these two outlooks on prose fiction writing are the product of a radically sloppy misinterpretation of the *modus operandi* of Hemingway and Salinger is undeniable. Both writers in fact use comparatively difficult methods of imposing order into their material. They force themselves to convey an intended impression while keeping the presence of the managerial author at a minimum. For the would-be author to sacrifice his "managerial" capacity-if we may employ a term which has acquired some unfortunate connotations-is at best a perversion of his artistic function, fails to produce art, and is thus inexcusable.

This craftlessness, so common among college writers, is especially infuriating in poetry, if only because we associate a poem with the highest literary craftsmanship. Much of the best modern poetry has been exceedingly difficult. It has often not used traditional methods of ordering words and thoughts. If poets reflect the age, then ours is a wasteland age. Poetry is prostituted by one who slaps onto his notebook a few disjunctive phrases dredged out of his id, assuring the reader that the mishmash contains cosmic significance.

In the best of modern poetry, as in the best of modern prose, much craftsmanship will be found. Prose, good prose, uses many of the qualities of poetry - rhythm and stress, assonance, alliteration, and figures of speech. When well placed, these qualities are effective and need not be accompanied by the purple shout, "Look at this stunningly, poetically sensitive prose."

Take as an example this passage from Herman Melville's always-popular *Moby Dick*:

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetic feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. With greedy ears I learned the mystery of that murderous monster against whom all others and I had taken our oaths of violence.

Did you notice the strength of the rhythmical rise and fall or the language, the change in mood with the change in length of the phrase? Did you see the repetition employed in "had gone up with ... had been welded with"? The assonance of "oath ... soul"? The alliteration of "murderous monster" and "violence and revenge"? The music of "mystical, sympathetic feeling"? Probably, you did not at first perceive all of these things, for Melville is a craftsman; craftsmen are modest and do not step out of their way to impress you. But the term "poetic" is easily observable if we typograph this passage by lines, as poetry:

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew;  
My shouts had gone up with the rest;  
My oath had been welded with theirs;  
And stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath,  
Because of the dread in my soul.  
A wild, mystical, sympathetic feeling was in me;  
Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine.  
With greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous monster  
Against whom I and all the others  
had taken our oaths of violence and revenge.

If we were analyzing poetry this passage from the opening of Chapter 41 of Moby Dick, we would mention the following:

- alliterations: "was one," welded with," "murderous monster," "others ... our oaths of," violence and revenge."
- assonances: "was one," "rest ... welded ... theirs," "mystical, sympathetic," "feeling ... seemed ... greedy."
- metaphorical expressions: "weld ... hammer and clinch," "quenchless," "greedy."
- repetitions: those we mentioned earlier.
- parallelism: second and third "lines."
- play one emotions: from dread to mystery, sympathy, greed, and revenge.
- the use of the anapest as a rhythmical unit in the first four "lines," and later in the "poem."

A dissection such as this tends to seem contrived - and indeed the dissection itself is, but the results are not.

The craftsmanly writer uses all the resources at his disposal. The use is not the same in poetry as it is in prose, and it is not the same in a quiet passage as in a lively one, nor in narration as in dialogue. But the resources remain the same. And craft remains an essential element in literature, prose and poetry both.

Do you recall Dylan Thomas' famous and difficult poem, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"? It is a villanelle.

I've Fallen in Love with the Dark

I've fallen in love with the dark,  
Where reality falls away.  
I know the passages of my heart.

The quiet before the dreaming starts.  
I silence all troubles of the day,  
And I fall in love with the dark.

Cream from milk my worries part  
From fantasies that I invite to stay  
And I know the passages of my heart.

I unleash ideas, and let them dart  
Among the pillows where I lay  
I've fallen in love with the dark.

Once I needed light to create my art  
--Illumination to find my way  
Within the passages of my heart.

But now I find the light too sharp  
To speak the hopes I wish to say.  
I've fallen in love with the dark  
And I know the passages of my heart.

Erin Butler



Red Painting

Fay Hoover

over there  
you think like you dream  
with one cool true raw vision from the  
head asking watching  
most scream—crying I sit frantically by  
shadows and under day  
I may ask dirt to shake above me a  
thousand rose petals  
I'll take some and together leave blood  
behind I do trudge and smear  
through the picture  
yet black tendrils shine but my delicate  
blue storm aches—  
Please boil away and let me beat eter-  
nity at a game.

Anonymous

On the Equitable Restructuring of Space

I am encouraged to make a point now  
About the progress in our science  
That has confined anger into the fields  
Of a soft countryside: that is to say, we have  
Forced violence into the corners of our art.

Anger is the molding of a clay form,  
Sealed in plaster and painted a horribly final black.  
Emotion is converted to metaphor, a game for poets,  
Equally confined to print in less than well-read journals.

Anonymous



## A Venetian Cycle

Tides  
Tow twilight  
And a timid moon towards  
Rosy-hazed  
Streaks  
Of lanterns:  
Border-lace of a lagoon.  
Paper boats  
Docked  
In puddled  
Glimmering alleyways,  
Painted in  
Last  
Evening's new,  
Love-swayed with gentle nudging,  
Nestled in  
Their  
Happy hubs,  
Rocking to the rising tune  
Of Aqua  
Alt'  
And Linting  
Lullabies of drooping casas—  
Old women  
Whose  
Wooden joints  
Crack achy with rheumatism  
And worn from  
Birth's  
Burden. Shutters  
Creak—  
Blinking back  
The salty rains of time which  
Sting wearied  
Panes  
While inside  
Doily memories adorn  
The hope chests  
Of  
History,  
Gathering dust in the dim  
Corridors  
Of their minds.

Night's fallen.  
Lover's laughter reverberates:

In the soft  
Drum  
Of showers  
Spring  
Gentle drops gracing the girl's  
Cheeks and dried  
With  
Skin's pleased  
Flush and the breeze of soft lips.  
Life be but  
Breath

Morn rises  
With the smug, determined grind  
Of blue-collar  
Vaps,  
Plugging through  
Rustic mist with frosty motors  
Sputtering  
Wake-  
Up calls to  
Foamy lapping of murky  
Canal sludge.  
Dawn's  
Pastels smear  
Across sleepy San Marco;  
Palazzo-  
Dew  
On squinting  
Gold mosaics aglow with  
Evident  
Proof  
For the tread  
Of living feet tendered to  
Faith in the  
In-  
Tangible  
Both present and transcendent  
Of those tides  
Which  
Tow twilights  
And timid new moons to shores  
Laura Florio



An Ordered Harmony

to be  
stones  
stacked  
delicate balance  
water smoothing me.

glistening with wet  
cool water  
slowly  
bit  
by  
bit  
shaped

my stones,  
wet blue, wet green,  
perspire in damp  
harmonious air.

among  
purposeless boulders  
overwhelmed pebbles.  
a niche of order  
a column of stone.

Erin Butler



The Canal Lies East, Beyond San Marco

Rachel Venuti

The Moon Lies West, Beyond Academia Bridge

To the onlooker,  
To the body on its short walk back from dinner,  
To the restless spirit that  
Having wasted thirty-seven dollars and two and  
One half hours of conversation:

I was struck with a certain, sudden  
Consciousness of life and water,  
the smell of evening, urban air.  
In the fading out of smoke and life, the evening  
slipped from out among the real  
And became a vision; I lost myself as I  
Stopped to look.

In what strange light did I appear,  
One hand gloved, one glove in hand  
Leaning over the wooden bridge?

Anonymous

A Call to Apollo in These Modern Times

Is it still mysterious that on august evenings,  
Just before the sun gives way to gravity,  
The river at its end is more color than substance,  
That it becomes gold and violet, vibrancy  
falling into a point?

Anonymous





Erin Butler

# Three To Four Ounces

Wake Forest  
University  
Fall 2000





The human soul weighs  
three to four ounces.

Don DeLillo  
*Americana*

LHI  
W4  
S78  
2001

## Three to Four Ounces Spring 2001

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Leah Hohman	Molly Mattingly	

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Jane Mead

*Three to Four Ounces* is published twice per year by students of Wake Forest University. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or the publisher. *Three to Four Ounces* is a non-profit organization; donations may be sent to P.O. Box 7247, Reynolda Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27109. Submissions may be sent to the same address. All material is chosen in a blind selection process. *Three to Four Ounces* is published by Goslen Printing Co., Winston-Salem. The typeface is Verdana. The cover art is *Cell Modular*, paper and wire, by Jim Argenta. Much thanks to Jane Mead and Logan Eldridge. We remember A.R. Ammons.



Jessamine Buck	<i>Starting Over</i>
Leah Hohman	<i>Untitled</i>
Susanne Hall	<i>A la Recherche du Temps Perdu</i>
Kristin Yocum	<i>Spain 15.23</i>
John Bradley	<i>Haiku</i>
Kristin Yocum	<i>Test?</i>
Jim Argenta	<i>Hot Shoes</i>
Carolyn Herring	<i>Untitled</i>
Loren Biggs	<i>We Cuttlefish: A Lovesong</i>
Kristin Yocum	<i>Clarence White Co. 4.32</i>
Jessamine Buck	<i>Untitled</i>
Carolyn Herring	<i>Untitled</i>
Jim Argenta	<i>Stratford Road</i>
Erin Butler	<i>Clementines</i>
Brian Melton	<i>Untitled</i>
Emily Orser	<i>(Loon)</i>
Jim Argenta	<i>Sunset Beach, NC 1993</i>



Starting over

Called it my sinkhole year.  
Coughing and knocking on doors  
til the shoestring broke  
and I sat down, gave out,  
peeling scales from my eyes.

Now I miss that threshing floor,  
because cutting out bad parts  
and paring back sick skin  
was easier than this effort  
of propping up what I find.

As if I could build anew  
from the scattered stones  
and tooth worried sticks  
some one else laid aside  
in their own breakdown lane.

Jessamine Buck



Black and White Lithograph Print

Leah Hohman

## A la Recherche du Temps Perdu

Candles throw shadows on the calendar.  
It must be nearly September by now, not July,  
but July's cowboys stand in swirling dust  
and keep watch over long gone tomorrows.  
She stares at the wall, he massages her angle, leg, toes,  
tries to bring blood back to feet once purple

with grape stomping revelry. That thick purple  
had seemed eternal. The cowboys on the calendar  
can't remember what day it is; they've lost their toehold.  
Something happened somewhere to change then to now.  
He chatters on, but she is trapped beneath tomorrow.  
They used to dance across these floors, but now dust

collects everywhere, thickly. He does not see the dust  
and smiles gently, and she thinks she sees his face purpled  
with death in the shadows. For him, tomorrows  
stretch out forever, time dances across calendars.  
She needs to embrace this moment, but *now*  
is born and dies before she can find it. Tip toe

up behind it. She recalls dancing toe to toe  
across a floor that was clean of dust.  
She clutches him, the candles are dying now,  
she digs nails into his back until purple  
marks appear. *Nothing to be done*. The calendar  
catches fire when she holds a candle to it. Tomorrows

melt, flames lick yesterdays and tomorrows  
breathlessly. He casts a worried glance, tiptoes  
out of the room. She stares at the floor; the calendar  
flakes into a mound of insidious dust.  
Flames—so recently yellow, orange, blue, purple—  
die, leave her alone in the darkness. Now,

without him, her mind crumbles each *now*,  
leaving behind only a dry residue for tomorrow.  
A tipped wine glass drips thick purple  
port into an irregular pool; she tiptoes  
through it and writes their names in the dust  
on her blank mirror. Smoke creeps from the calendar.

She will sleep now, but her memories tiptoe  
into tomorrow's daylight, trailing dusty,  
purple footprints stolen from a forgotten calendar.





Spain 15.23

Black and White Photograph

Kristin Yocum

Haiku: on the hand-signaling practices  
of medieval monasteries

"61. *Donne þu pipor habban wille  
cwoca þu mid þinum scyte  
finger ofer operne.*"

*Ic wolde pipor  
ac hie me briw sendon  
ēa, munuc-lif*

"61. When you want pepper,  
then knock with one index  
finger on the other."

I wanted pepper  
instead they sent me pottage  
the life of a monk

John Bradley



Test?

Black and White Photograph Collage

Kristin Yocum



Hot Shoes

Oil on Canvas

Jim Argenta



Black and White Photograph

Carolyn Herring

## We Cuttlefish: A Love Song

The theme is eternal and organic  
we could just as easily be cuttlefish  
repeating this scene since the Miocene Epoch,

we highly intelligent beings feeding off of  
shrimp, the occasional fish, and one another.  
Three hearts apiece for pumping blood and breaking.

I will not paint you in sepia.

I, the common cuttlefish so prone to cover myself  
in a black cloud when threatened. Drain my color  
until I am invisible and vanish leaving decoy ink.

I, seeming soft, am inverted mollusk, internally hiding my  
hard-shell calcium cuttlebone. Digging myself into the sand  
as camouflage for predators and prey.

And you, nocturnal as I, but particularly invertebrate  
and glitzy, blue blood coursing through your veins.  
Your chromatophores quicker than chameleon.

You, *Heteroteuthis dispar*, fire-shooting,  
blinded me paralyzed with the beautiful complexity  
of your bioluminescent cloud. And ate me whole.

I will not paint you in sepia.

I should have made use of  
useful tools, black ink cloud  
and inner calcium shell

but, having missed my chance  
for self defense, I will not  
append your self-preservation.

I will not paint you in sepia.

My indigestible cuttlebone will wash ashore,  
provide calcium supplement to some caged bird  
and contribute to the sharpening of her beak.

Loren Biggs





Clarence White Co. 4.32 Black and White Photograph Collage Kristin Yocum

Found a stone too big to skip  
and traced the letters of your name.  
A legislature of the night  
divined within its ancient veins.

I tossed it to the glossy shoals,  
Hid your name from sunlit air.  
But when I'm drawn to any shore  
I read it scattered everywhere.

Jessamine Buck



Black and White Photograph

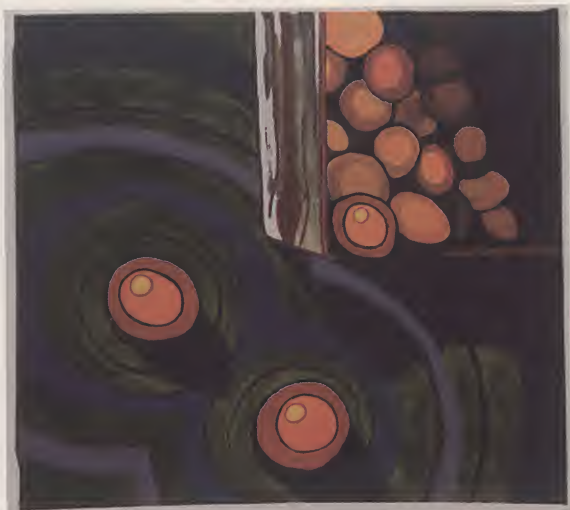
Carolyn Herring



Stratford Road

Photograph

Jim Argenta



Clementines

Oil on Canvas

Erin Butler

In the murky alleyway I stepped over eggshells, broken  
and scattered like raindrops on the black  
shirt of a SoHo club-hunk. If it weren't for the fall –  
the dark, wet-leaf air – I wouldn't have run from under  
the neon rainbow at Old Compton's or been asked for drugs  
by a homeless man who made "Little Wing" longer on harmonica.

The songs he minced through his plastic harmonica  
pinched me – pierced my head – breaking  
my skull open like punctured veins sucking drugs  
from syringes. I continued looking for a Black  
Cab or a mini-cab or a brightly lit shelter under  
which I could wait. Clouds collapsed and rainfall

clicked on the asphalt – on the rainbow fell  
rain – on the neon – on other club hunks and the harmonica.  
The dripping, clicking rain pressed me underneath  
the narrow overhangs of buildings as I broke  
into a sprint away from Old Compton's and the black  
man who sang with the homeless man, *the drugs*

*don't work.* I hit Poland Street, breathless, – dragging  
my blunted toes behind my bare heels, falling  
face-first into a slab of white to gray to blackness.  
Later I awoke to the distant sound of a harmonica  
and of soaked West End transvestites with broken  
bra-straps screaming for fairness and understanding.

Dank fog seeped from the dregs rotting under  
manholes and lining gutter openings – from plastic bags dragged  
over the rugged asphalt by garbage men careless of broken  
glass and wet tissues. Filth that leaked from summer to fall  
to winter would be cleaned in spring by the wooden harmony  
of pigeon clucks. But that night soiled me in blackness –

a weapon so wielded to be spilled in every alley – black –  
separating the soot and the asphalt – above the rainbow and under  
clouds – on the face of the fiend who mouthed the foul harmonica.

I made an attempt to run for day, for brightness – a drug –  
that rinses the dirt from which I run, only to fall  
back on and dive into – like cabs to take me, broken,

away from black-lace transvestites – from the drugs  
and the soggy undergarments of the drunk hunk fallen  
to the dirge of the harmonica: ear-splitting, cold and broken.

Brian Melton



(loon)

Over the edges of water,  
between the rain-swept winds,  
her call floats

        deep   and   low  
keening for echo.  
Two tones interpret each other,  
reducing the world to a pond  
where one cry answers the other.

Emily Orser



Sunset Beach, NC 1993

Oil on Canvas

Jim Argenta

# Three to Four Ounces

Wake Forest  
University  
Spring 2001





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three to four ounces.

Don DeLillo  
*Americana*



# Three to Four Ounces

## Fall 2001

LHI  
W4  
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Our hearts are with the victims of September 11, 2001.

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Today

I think for today  
I'll simply lie in bed  
Drinking Strawberry Milk  
Through a straw that bends,  
And hiding from the concubines.

Nicole Guippone

Tongue on Ribs



John Manning

Paint on Canvas

Cede, Recede

The boy on the beach  
is drinking heavily.  
His saliva drips  
from pearly teeth  
between sips and fleeting sobs  
over the recent suicide  
of his sister, Scylla.

The heaving stroke of two-two tide  
pushes clumps into sand-dune shoulders,  
exposed to unwavering wind  
and half a moon.

He sucks  
the briny liquid and swallows  
in an eddy of disgust, then  
release—a cavernous laugh  
in a voice hoarse like ocean ebb.

Anonymous



## Try to Lean

Oblong sphere knifed clean; a potato  
Potent, yet weary from wounds  
Propels toward its last wall,  
Shedding that mortal coil, that  
Maternal soil with a final, simple sigh.

We see the scene from below the table;  
On hands and knees we plead.  
Unseen, we are the soil stripped clean,  
But still we try to lean  
Towards the setting sun.

"Where are the flowers you promised?"

"Outside the house along the wall,"  
He murmured in a droning drawl,

"Forget the flowers, they'd forget you."

"You can't even see a flower without  
A wall. You can't even see a wall  
Without a potato to throw with.  
And you can't see them. They are still here"

His eyes drop, mercury-laden and  
Heavy as my weight feels on my hands.

Like insignificant satellites  
Our stares ascend and circle  
A central consciousness until full  
Orbit reaches vacant quietude.

I felt as though we all existed  
I thought they might feel it too.

Silence makes me want to be a moon.  
Violence brings thoughts of lo—  
Not thoughts of a starchy Ohio or  
Of a brown skin broken open  
Cut and white atop the linoleum.

Condescending Jupiter watches outside.  
Lodged within the black excrement  
Of and inverted night sky,  
With and eye so distant, low and high.

Kevin Oliver

Untitled



Rebecca Boswell

Colored Pen on Paper

Persona

I wait.

I practice for you,

humming while I cook  
in the kitchen as the steam  
from the rice splutters, rising in clouds,

*look what I made.*

I arrange the magnetic poetry kit  
on the refrigerator,

"honey-drunk-lust-river" -

the rice burns to the bottom  
with a layer of gummy paste,  
the peanut sauce is too thin,  
the lima beans still cold in places.

A failure, and you are not here to laugh  
with me. I eat anyway.

I am still waiting.

I remember your love of words,  
so I practice for this too -

"bare-still-shadows-whisper."

Molly Mattingly

Untitled



Rebecca Boswell

Carved Limestone

## The Dog Pen

By

Natalie Bonomo

The day I watched my mother's things being hauled away in a garbage truck was the first day I threw a rock at the dog. I sat on the front porch, the heavy heat of the July air pressing on me from all sides like a suffocating sleeping bag I was wrapped in. The lolling truck moved farther and farther down the road, stopping every so often at a house and piling more garbage bags onto the ones that held my mother's possessions.

Lydia rode up the sidewalk on her purple neon bike. She stopped when she saw me, climbed off and undid the chinstrap of her helmet. "I didn't think your mom would let you ride this far to my house," I said watching her pull off the elbow- and knee-pads my father didn't care if I wore.

"I have to be back by five for dinner. We're having tofu and mom said I shouldn't get my new Mary Jane's dirty either." She pointed at her glittery red shoes.

"They look like the ones Dorothy wore to Oz."

She looked over my shoulder toward the dog's cage. Ramsey was lying in his pen, his head resting on his black paws, his tongue moved in and out like a yo-yo between his set of white teeth.

"You wanna go see the dog?" I asked. Not waiting for a response from Lydia, I grabbed her wrist and pulled her toward the pen.

The strong smell of the cedar wood chips my father lined the cage with shoved its way into my nostrils; the dog's cage smelled the same way that my mother's jewelry box used to smell. For one fleeting instant I was sitting on my mother's bed, the red flowered bedspread beneath our freckled legs, my mother leaning over me just close enough that I could smell the light scent of the rosewater cream she always wore. I was holding the cedar jewelry box between my bony knees, watching intensely as she pulled out broken chains of gold and tacky pearl necklaces from the tiny compartments.

Angered, I pulled out the rubber band that was holding back my dark red curls and shot it at the dog. I tried to aim it at his eye, but it just hit him beside his left ear. The dumb animal didn't even open his eyes. "Mom doesn't let me do that to our dog. Are you sure you're not going to give your dog brain damage or something, Adriana? He'll have a bladder problem and then he won't be able to pee on your neighbor's trees anymore, or he could get cancer." She informed me of these facts as I picked up a handful of gray gravel from the driveway.



Weighing the tiny stones in my fist, I told her, "He doesn't care, and besides you can't get cancer from a rubber band." I hurled the handful at Ramsey but the only response I got from the dog was the twitch of an ear and the opening of an eye. His indifference was more than I could take. We stood there until she had to go home, two nine-year-old girls throwing fistfuls of gravel at a Rottweiler in a five by ten pen.

In the living room, lying on my back, staring at the various cracks in the paint chipped ceiling, I moved my arms and legs like I was making a snow angel in the faded red carpet. Marci, some college girl my father had gotten to watch me while he was at work, had left already. Dad was supposed to get back from the University at six; I wanted to ask him if Lydia could sleep over. I heard the sound of a key rattling in the lock and immediately stopped moving my arms and legs and lay as still as I could on the carpet, arms pressed to my sides, legs straight out in front of me. I heard him put his black leather briefcase onto the kitchen table and then his approaching muffled footsteps.

"Adriana, what's the matter with you?" He shouted from the kitchen. His voice always sounded like he had a stuffy nose and he dragged out his vowels which I hated. "Answer me. I know you're in the living room." The oak cupboard slammed shut and I heard him pouring himself a drink. "You acting like this is the last thing I need after teaching a bunch of ignorant college students with hangovers all day." He paused and took a gulp of the dark yellow liquid as he walked toward me.

I hated the smell of it. It smelled like the peroxide my mom used to put on the cuts I got on my elbows. I put a hand over my nose and breathed in the scent of ivory soap. Marci was really into washing hands after each snack and after I touched anything that wasn't 'sanitary.' "I don't appreciate coming home to a daughter who make believes she's a corpse in the middle of the damn living room."

"I'm not pretending!" I shouted from the floor.

"I really don't have time for this."

My father loomed above me, looking down on me like I was a cockroach crawling on his polished shoe. The sleeves of his blue dress shirt were rolled up to his elbows, revealing hairy pale arms. In his right hand was the half empty glass. The fingertips of his other hand brushed against his black pants. He continued to sip the drink as he stared at something on the floor beside me, occasionally raising his free hand and running it through his thinning brown hair. His dull hazel eyes were hidden behind black wire-rimmed glasses that framed his hollow face; I wondered what he would do if I sprang up and wrapped my arms around his neck. Instead, I shifted my freckled face into the scratchy red carpet that smelled of dust. Letting it hold my cheek, I shut my eyes.



"I'm taking Ramsey for his walk now."

I gripped the carpet and pulled at it, pretending it was Ramsey's fur.

He sighed and rubbed a palm over the stubble on his cheek. "Make yourself something to eat, you can microwave the container of ravioli or make a peanut butter sandwich. And, when I get back, I don't want to find you lying on the living room floor."

I got up as soon as I heard the door slam. It was no use waiting for him to get back; he always stayed out for hours with the dog, telling me to make myself something to eat and to keep myself occupied. His walks probably consisted of circling the entire neighborhood at least a dozen times, staying out with the dog as long as he possibly could.

As I walked down the faded yellow hallway, my eyes drifted over the squares and rectangles of color where my mother's pictures used to hang. I could almost see the photographs inside the thin black lines of dust that outlined the bright squares of yellow. Rusted brown nails stuck out from the walls, lonely objects, waiting for a picture to be hung on them. Every room in the house had the ghost frames, I couldn't stand having the reminders that there was supposed to be something, someone's smiling face in them.

The only picture my father hadn't taken down was on his dark cherry dresser tucked behind a bottle of cologne. It was of my mother and Ramsey sitting outside in the backyard underneath the only tree in our yard. My mother had brought Ramsey home from the SPCA a few weeks before she got sick of being a mother and left. Looking into mirror above the dresser, I met a pair of startling eyes the color of wet grass. If I looked into them hard enough, I could almost pretend they were my mother's eyes or that the sprinkling of dark orange freckles across my nose was hers. But as I searched my face, looking for reminders of her, I knew somewhere in my nine-year-old mind that she was never coming back.

*I was sitting in the dim kitchen, surrounded by the purple tulip pattern on the overly bright wallpaper that ran from the ceiling to the shiny linoleum floor. My mother had poured me a bowl of fruit loops cereal, but by the time I changed out of my nightgown and came downstairs for breakfast it had turned into a soggy rainbow soup.*

*"Mom!" I yelled, staring in disgust at the mushy cereal in my bowl.*

*"What is it?" She asked, her slim nose crinkling as she turned from the yellow kitchen counter where she'd been opening a can of Pedigree dog food. Her hair was loose, as it always was, the curls shooting up like she'd stuck her finger in an electric socket.*

*"This cereal is disgusting. It's all spongy." I informed her as I jabbed my spoon into the mess in front of me.*

*"But I just poured it for you a few minutes ago." Her voice sounded like one giant sigh.*

*"It looks like I ate it and then threw it up into my bowl." I watched as her face fell and she turned her back to me. My father dragged his feet as he walked into the kitchen with today's paper tucked under his arm.*

*"Daniel," My mother called from the counter, "What do you think about getting windows added to the house instead of buying that new computer you wanted?" She asked as she dumped the contents of the can into the dog dish.*

*"We already went through this."*

*"But you're not being reasonable."*

*"I'm sick of using this laptop constantly and I'm not spending the extra money on windows. Do you know how much the heating bill is going to rise? And what if it takes too long to put in the windows and it rains, or it gets to be November and it starts snowing? What are we going to do then?" He talked to her in the same tone that he used on me when I had asked for a pet ferret.*

*"But it's June, not November, not even August. It's not going to snow for months, Daniel." She was pleading now; I couldn't stand to hear her beg like that.*

*"Honey, when you start doing something with your life and get a job, you can decide what we do with the money. Until then, I'll decide." He told her as he opened the morning paper to the business section and stared at it intensely, his hazel eyes darting across the page like two goldfish in a bowl.*

*My mother always complained that there was never enough light in our house. She loved windows, she used to tell me that when she was a little girl, she'd dream of living in a giant house with glass walls and skylights so she could see outside and wouldn't feel trapped.*

*"Mom?" I asked softly from my seat at the table.*

*"Yes, Adriana?" The same tired voice again.*

*"I'm eating my cereal." I said, watching as her thin pink lips turned into a fragile smile that looked like it was trying very hard not to collapse.*

I shot rubber bands at the dog and threw rocks at him. I shot rubber bands with paper clips stuck on them. After finding a bag full of Hershey kisses, I threw them into the cage, remembering that my mother had once told me that chocolate was bad for dogs and that I mustn't ever feed it to Ramsey. I found leftover cherry fire poppers from the Fourth of July in our kitchen junk drawer and hurled them at Ramsey, watching as the little bombs went off around his paws. I sprayed hot water from the hose that had been sitting out in the sun all summer and drenched him until he looked like a wet rat. When I was supposed to feed him, I dumped the contents of his bowl along the outside perimeter of his cage, feeling a bit like Greta leaving a trail of breadcrumbs. Soon, whenever Ramsey saw me he

would growl, a deep primal rumbling sound, like the thunder before a storm.

"Stop arguing with me, you need to learn how," my father said between clenched teeth as he stood in the screen doorway that led off the kitchen. He was holding Ramsey's leash in one hand and shaking it at me.

"I don't want to talk to you anymore!" I yelled as I crossed my arms and turned my head up to the ceiling so the tears would fall back into my eyes and not stream down my cheeks.

"Adriana, I have god knows how many term papers to correct, and I can't waste my time walking Ramsey." He was trying to soften his voice now, but the anger behind it seeped through.

"I don't care about your stupid term papers" The last thing I wanted to do was walk Ramsey. I kept picturing him attacking me as I tried to hook his leash onto his collar.

"Lydia is going to be here in a few minutes. And if you haven't walked Ramsey by then, I'm going to have to tell her mother to turn around and take her back home. Do you understand?" He leaned forward and stared hard at me, like I was the one who stood in the way of him and his new computer.

I found myself in front of the dog pen, holding a faded blue leash in my right hand and a red doggie treat in the shape of a paw in the other. Ramsey was at the opposite end of the cage snarling, the edges of his lips rose, as if there were strings attached and someone was pulling up on them. I had always felt safe with the fence between us, never before had I stepped into the cage, never had he stepped out of it when I was around.

I heard the car pulling into the driveway before I saw it. Lydia and her mom climbed out of the dark blue Plymouth and came around to the back of the house where I was holding the leash. I looked from the dog to Lydia and back to the dog again. Ramsey started barking incessantly. The sharp hollow ring of his bark hurt my ears and I was tempted to clap my hands over them.

"You know what?" Lydia called from behind me, "Your dog sounds like those police dogs on TV." I turned, she was standing there grinning, the gap between her two front teeth showing. She looked like she had just gotten out of the bath, her black hair shining like the little kids in shampoo commercials. "Oh, and we had these oysters and seaweed for dinner, and mom said I could bring you some of it to try." With that, she pulled out a foul smelling Tupperware container from behind her back that held a few speckled gray blobs and a dark green mush.

"That's sick, Lydia. I'm not eating that stuff, maybe Ramsey would eat it." I mumbled.

"Is everything all right Adriana?" Lydia's mom asked as she bent down and placed her palms on her knees. "You don't have to eat the seafood. Lydia



just wanted to show you in case you'd like to try something new." She was staring at me with gray eyes, her silky black hair was up in some sort of twist and held with a fancy silver clip. Her hair was so different from my mother's long red curls that used to float around her head like a mass of springs.

"It just smells gross," I said averting my eyes and staring down at my scuffed pink high tops. I tried to shove my hands into the pockets of my overalls, not realizing I was still holding the leash.

"Did you just get done walking your dog?"

"No, I was gonna do it soon though," I told her as I looked at the dog cage where Ramsey stood still as a rock, his tentative gaze fixed on Lydia and her mother. Glancing up at the office window, I saw my father's face outlined in the dark glass.

"Well, what are we waiting for? Give me that leash, honey. Now don't pull away like that, I have a dog at home and I know how to walk her." With that, we followed her over to the pen.

I can still see it replaying in my mind, as if someone had recorded it in slow motion.

Lydia's mom pulled up on the metal latch that kept the pen locked, and opened the green wire door. Ramsey, startled at his unexpected freedom, continued to stay in his cage. Lydia's mom told me to call my dog, so in a soft voice, I called his name. His gaze met mine and suddenly I could see the dog running straight at me with hatred in his eyes. I didn't scream; Lydia did enough of that for the both of us. Instead, I just stood waiting for the attack I knew I deserved. I heard the creaking sound of the screen door opening as I saw Ramsey coming closer and closer. Right as he leaped, a hand shot out and grabbed the snarling dog in midair. For an instant I thought it was my father, but when I turned, Lydia's mother was gripping the brown leather collar with straining arms. There were thin lines of blood trickling from her arms where Ramsey had scratched her. Lydia's mother looked up at me with an expression of disbelief.

She was the one who managed to put Ramsey back in his cage. Despite the fact that he was once again behind the barrier of a green chain link fence, I didn't feel safe. For all I cared, it could have been a fence of spider webs or concrete blocks; it wouldn't have made a difference. Lydia's mother hadn't seen my father standing on the porch because her back was turned toward the house. She wiped the blood off her arm and onto her dress, then reached out and brushed the ends of my hair with her fingertips.

My father stood on the porch for a moment, fiddling with the collar of his white button down shirt and blinking his hazel eyes rapidly as if somehow the image of what had just happened would disappear from his memory. For one brief moment, I thought he was going to pick his black

dress shoes off the cement porch, and run to me, arms outstretched. But he just blinked, and walked back up the porch steps until he reached the door. Before he stepped across the doorway, he fixed his stunned stare on me. His eyes were vacant holes that looked right through. He turned his blank stare away from me and stepped through the doorway. The sound of the screen door slamming shut reverberated in my mind as I pressed my face into the soft fabric of Lydia's mother's shirt.

The purpose of poetry is to remind us  
how difficult it is to remain just one person,  
for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors,  
and invisible guests come in and out at will

Czeslaw Milosz  
from *Ars Poetica*?

Untitled



Rebecca Boswell

Oil on Canvas



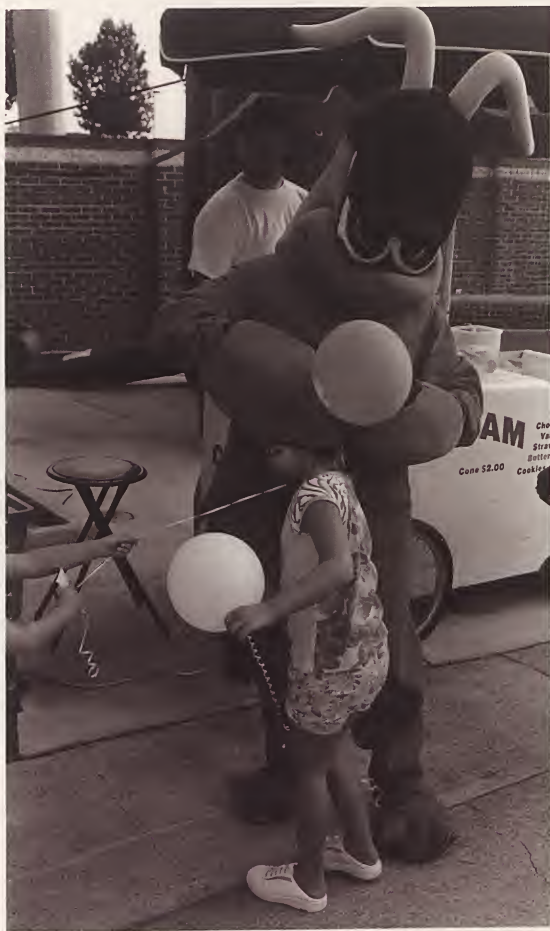
Mystique

The feminist fought me  
over a slice of Graham-  
Cracker pie  
(the Hamptons'

*very own*  
key lime). And I,  
in a provocative top,  
fought the bitch back,  
offering a bitter chocolate  
cake (flourless).

Nicole Guipponne

Untitled



John Norman

Black and White Photograph

Untitled



Erica Grace

Oil on Canvas

(low-maintenance)

It was built on simple things—  
sarcastic digs, pajama pants,  
a lack of any kind of daily plan.  
Chinese came in styrofoam,  
and dates were HBO.  
Shit went down around us,  
and there we sat, content  
with siestas and a shut-off phone—  
how could i have ever spent  
these lazy days alone?  
If longing looks can come  
from thrift-store gifts  
when she turns fifty-one,  
then you can count me in—  
i'll be passed out and dreaming,  
drooling on the couch.

Pete Bromaghim

## Highway Song

Honey let's lose these filmed wine  
glasses, it's a false bouquet  
they bloom. Troll long out of town

and stretch one arm down to that  
dot- dashed- dot white line—  
it plays out our highway song.

Breathe it inward. Extinction  
and exhaust funnel upward.  
*Burning dinosaur bones,*

singing Johnny Cash across  
state lines, we'll fume into  
our next town, settle in and  
tumble down.

Headlit dawn shines past the dash  
board; a private skyline breaks  
upon our scene. Miles from here

we'll meet ourselves, shaking  
hands with ourselves, nowhere  
taking leave of ourselves.

Arise therefore and kill the lights.

We'll start tonight somehow  
to outstrip our exhalations.  
When we lick along the highway

and lurch into empty exits,  
no one knows us past our plates,  
no one sees us past our faces.

False dawn fingers night's decline.

Jessamine Buck

The Ambiguities of Ms. White



Alex Moran

Color Photograph



**Three  
to  
Four  
Ounces**

Fall 2001





**The human soul weighs  
three to four ounces.**

**Don DeLillo**  
*Americana*

# Three to Four Ounces

## Spring 2002

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## Tonight They Went Dancing

Tiptoes in the midnight shadow  
Crinoline carpet crushed between a clumsy scuffle  
and the hinges creak.  
Quick!  
pretend to visit the Land of Nod  
beware the vagrant ray of light hunting for the telltale gleam of half-opened eyes

tender Hall Light washes her grandmother's ruffled daisy quilt  
a pastel dreamscape  
twenty timidly exhausted fingertips gather the restless bedding  
a clutch of faded lilac  
silky cloud, come and nestle in the crevice between chin and ear and shoulder

Adoring glances  
our little angel  
out little hellion  
out little wildflower

finished pine whines as it anticipates meeting the door frame  
Lift the hinges!  
You'll wake her!  
The room exhales  
Turn over and wait for it . . .  
the yellow line under the door blinks      then disappears      the dance is over

Foiled again.

Julia Roberts

## Fist

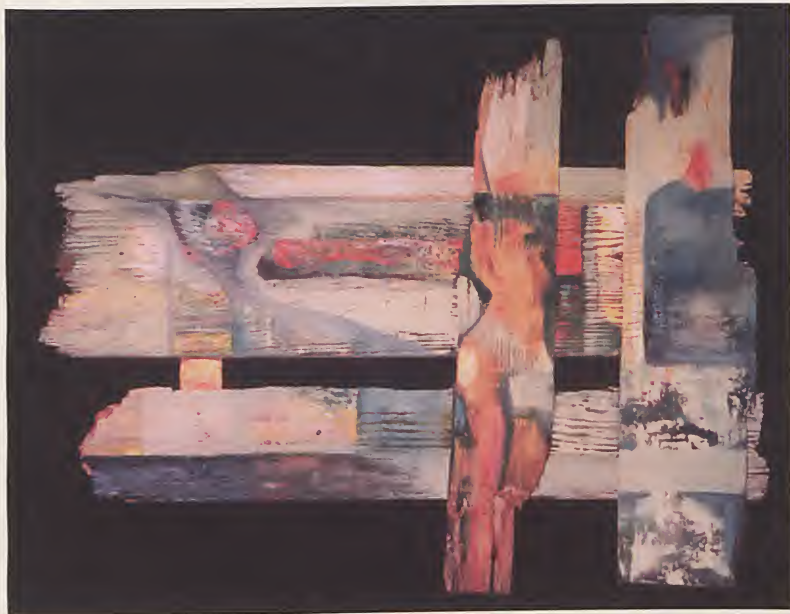
I was a fist that summer and my teeth stank most afternoons, certainly in July, when I remembered winter as a calm lie, not at all like bleach, which is actually winter, to pound and grind teeth, to teach me that fall and spring are the better seasons, as the movement toward action always runs better than work, as work is always a fist for burning.

That summer I had many dreams about George Romero and zombies, which always made me laugh, especially when they sang *Time of the Season* and that line, "Who's your daddy?" which always made me a little sick but not too disgusted to forget the song with fists now as limp wrists coming towards you and behind you dragging one leg and I only felt sorry for Duane Jones and feared the supposed ignorance of the police.

And, I could be wrong about the month, July or June because both were excruciatingly humid and I felt my skin as always confining my bone and muscles, and I was always hungry for you or others and always looking for the handles to the broken door, a punch in the stomach or an afternoon on the James River.

Paul Bullock

Wood Piece #1



Jennifer Ryf

Oil on Wood

How I got an A in Philosophy  
Or  
(Three Good Reasons to Kill Your Roommate)  
By  
Scott Scheule

*Good and bad, I define these terms  
Quite clear, no doubt, somehow.*  
-Dylan

January 21<sup>st</sup>

*Simply the Post*  
Headline:  
Rush Season Begins Again.

Jack woke up at twelve, realized his roommate was in the room because the snoring was drowning out the nonexistent campus birds. The school was awake, now he was too. Roommate lives on Greenwich Mean Time, possibly in attempt to be multicultural, best not to wake him, ever.

Banging on the bathroom wall, Madonna playing.

"Turn it down, Tommy, I can feel my balls shriveling." He uttered it mid-stream, stressing every third word.

He made a cup of microwaveable tea in the lounge, sat down on the overly expensive couch. Jesus Christ, there are people starving in Burma, or somewhere. Reading something for philosophy at two. Finished at one-thirty.

The sky was the dirty amber of dead things. He grabbed a coffee from the Starbucks. Prices... Yuck. One pack of sugar, no cream.

Some girl he recognized coming from the other direction, dark ponytail, eyes like mineral.

"Hey..."

"The name's Jack."

"Yeah, I know."

Managed to smile without smiling. Tough trick, have to take a few seminars and at least one yoga class to accomplish it. Came natural to Jack, like skeet shooting to guys named Harold.

And they were on their separate ways.

In class, the professor explained long postulates of Hume, lining them up like lopsided bricks on the blackboard, building to the day's conclusion.

"I don't buy it, George."

"What do you buy, Mr. Nautlis?" the professor asked.

"Hemp and hemp."

"Do a lot of braiding?"

Shook his head, slowly back and forth, smiled with smiling, then slowly nodded off. Dreams of—of course—being stalked by large, silver-furred wolves.

Roommate reeled in at five in the morning and got in bed with him. Jack woke up, pushed him on the floor, and it made a sound like marble smacking against concrete. Roommate promptly started snoring.



January 29<sup>th</sup>

Jack listens to the Who, and very little else. The Who is the embodiment of the Sixties, the voice of those who would not sell out love and free love and global love and the kind of love that twists a knot in your duodenum, just for kinks.

"Who you listening to in there?" Tommy asked from the hallway. He weighs eighty pounds, likes to walk around in polka dot boxers, has two earrings that he doesn't look right without.

"The Who."

"Who?" When he laughs you can see his internal organs. Misshapen pancreas, someone should tell him to go to a doctor.

"Go away." Jack's eyes are the eyes of the gothic writer who is either sleeping too little, too much, or has thrown off sleeping as a commodity the bourgeoisie have acquired by their immoral trampling of the working class.

"Yo, is Adam in here?"

Trying to think of something sarcastic. The current doesn't quite complete the circuit. Buzzing, buzzing...nothing. "Go away."

"Man, you hurt my feelings when you say that."

"Go away." Smiling. But not actually.

"Aight."

The light reaches in through the windows, and makes Euclidian planes in an orange web over the room. The sun is an ancient top in the sky, rolling back and forth, a ball bearing in the hand of God. Today, Jack is a theist. His roommate, who he hasn't seen in three days, is a theist as well, or at least he was three days ago.

Walking into the laundry room, the girl with the mineral eyes is sitting in a chair folding clothes.

"Hi, Jack."

She's cuter than most. Amen.

"Hi... I don't know your name."

"Jackie."

"Well so much for that."

Had a nice laugh, the kind that faded out but left her smiling. Lived off campus somewhere.

He pulled a shirt out of his basket with an icicle-shaped stain that was either tomato sauce or blood. Perused it for a while.

"Geez, what happened?"

"I think I sustained some kind of knife wound. That or it's my roommate's. And he sustained some kind of knife wound."

Threw it away in a plastic trashcan filled with dryer lint and beer cans. It was marked glass recyclables. Jesus Christ, ten billion species a day going extinct in the rain forest.

January 30<sup>th</sup>

The smell of time is directly proportional to the floor you get off at on the library elevator, Jack decided. Also, the smell of time equals the smell of silverfish shit. Hence, the smell of silverfish shit is directly proportional to the floor you get off at on the library elevator. The rain hit the windows the way it hits windshields on stormy nights. So strange, with thunder in the background, the



door closes on the busy lobby, opens on the empty seventh, where they keep the dust. No one there. Elevator tips its hat, flashes a light through its seams, and slides away.

"Call out the inquisition..."

Government surveys, Zen and the art of writing books that are never checked out, oversize works, psychedelic propaganda with bursts of tweaked purples, super lemon fluorescence, and red, tearing at the corners.

"Because there's something in the air..."

The desks are behind the CD.125 section, a line of three ancient ones glowing white from the fluorescents. Lightning leaped between electrodes on the sky and ground, making sounds like trucks being overturned.

"We got to get together sooner or later..."

Someone standing in the bookcases, drawn up and bonded to the shadows like milky steam. Turned and smiled. Light caught his teeth, glared on his porcelain fingernails. Adam.

"You singing to yourself?"

"The fuck you been?"

Moved out of the light, still smiling, straddled a chair. Built like a barrel of muscles. Hairy knuckles slam against a desktop. "Check this out. I'm at this party Tuesday at the Delts and this douche dumps a beer over my head to impress his boyfriend or something. Now, I don't care if you're drunk—"

"I really don't care at all."

Jack's leaning his head against the glass, can feel the wet through the pane in his hair. Trains of lightning sliding down tracks in the sky, narrowly missing each other behind him. Should've added, "And I'm sober," but thought of it too late.

"Whatcha reading dair?" Reached for the book, Jack pulled it back and laid it behind him. Adam undaunted, tapping knuckles quickly against the desk. Gabe Kaplan called, said he wants his hair back. Eventually finds a way into his story. Lights start to flicker on and off while he's talking, and he goes on like he doesn't notice. When they finally stay out, the moon flexes parallelograms into the aisles between the bookcases. Jack blames him, sends the blame out of his eyes like arctic metal prods. KA WHAM! orated the heavens.

Adam looked around. "Think the elevator still works?"

"No."

February 1<sup>st</sup>

A smoother evening, black like the Caribbean Sea at midnight, wind lapping against the sides of trees, cool as frost. Clouds scratched into the surface of the sky. Time crawling certainly toward morning.

God watched the two of them debate His existence; her legs making acute angles on the park bench, Jack staring forward at the pond, arm around her shoulder, drifting away but moored. The moon looked like a headlight in the distance, banking clouds, coming closer, getting louder, Doppler effect in cumulus medium, rolling straight towards him.

A dog howl interrupted them, after they'd gotten further. Sounded like a teakettle boiling, sounded like a man moaning in an abandoned house. Got down into the bones like a sarcoma with teeth.

"Jesus Christ. Was that a wolf?"

"You know for an atheist, you sure use that name a lot."

"Don't get clever. You're not that cute."

The quartz in those eyes pulsed. Who gives a fuck about Burma?

Nightmares that night. Lots of metallic wolves, mouths filled with dull gray barbs, lots of running, lots of dark tunnels in woods that have no names, at dusk on the threshold of misty graveyards, dodging holes in the ground. Woke up at four, sweaty, Adam not there. May have to stop sleeping altogether.

February 3<sup>rd</sup>

Had to go into the city to buy pot. Had to come back to smoke it. Had to buy air freshener from the campus store. Had to open the windows on top of that. Had to study for a test but by three it seemed more important to write poetry on the back of history notebook. Five hours later, he discovered he'd been writing in French. Translated it. Turned out to be three haikus about fingernails. Adam rose from bed at seven, showered, shaved and left.

"Do you ever go out?" he asked. He wore a brown leather jacket, hair puffed, looked like a cop hitting the bars after his shift.

"You ever go to class? Get up before five?" Smiling. Bastard mistook it for friendliness.

Picked a fight with economics professor earlier in the day about capitalism. For all intents and purposes, won it.

February 11<sup>th</sup>

Crammed in the student union for biology exam, no sleep. At five AM, went for a walk in the park. Had coffee with philosophy professor. Not stoned but looked it, with purple purses like quoits under his eyes. Jack, not the professor.

"You don't look so good, Jack." A Hispanic accent, not ashamed of it, grew up in the ghetto and now here, degree de los filosoficos, if I can do it so can you, just ask for help.

"I didn't sleep. Suppose our actions don't correspond with our beliefs but rather coincide with them, merely by chance. Perhaps we shouldn't try to form our actions in response to our beliefs, but rather ~~we~~ ou know ~~we~~ ice versa." Nursing coffee, dark chocolate color and fuming in the cold air. Biology test a C, surely, but in light of metaphysical discussion, test is reduced to nonexistence, as it does not think for itself.

"No progressive thought?"

"No, man, you're missing the point. Not necessarily...bound...to what you believe. But inclined to follow what you've started to act with in accordance with. Fuck it, it's not important. Alright, say the world was perfect. Think it'd be boring?" On the lovely fuckall big black balloon, characteristic of the insomniac.

"Absolutely." Hispanic eyes twinkle.

"So why fight evil? If its abolition would be interminably boring?" Sluggish but carefree. Vaguely aware he didn't know what *interminably* meant.

Professor tapped his fingers, and lifted his palms. "Sympathy for the Devil."

"Exactly." Jack lit a cigarette, offered one to professor, didn't accept.

"Quit a long time ago."

"Why? Does the tar or the cigarette or the...the..." Snapping his fingers. "...  
*cancer* even exist?"

"I allow for the possibility." Funny, but then conversation dragged, got inane, unacceptable with baby humpbacks being made into orphans in the North Sea. Have to love each other, love the Who, love everything. Keep things exciting at the same time. Conundrum.

Didn't sleep that night. Adam been gone for a couple days, staying with some girl. Park closed to find rabid dog. In wee hours of morning, converted to Christianity. Jack, not the rabid dog.

February 15<sup>th</sup>

Six in the morning. Vodka'd roommate can't get up into his own bed. Having lots of fun trying, though. Jack knew he knew he was awake, but pretended he didn't know he knew.

"Johnny boy? You awake?"

Two hours later. Sun coming in through blinds, turned room sickly blue color. Adam snores like he's got an oboe shoved in his left nostril, a clarinet in the right. Bassoon currently tacit. Feels like a hospital in here. Dreamed a wolf bit him. Colorless, mottled gray and black and white, conjured like a shadow moving out of the moonlight. Icy teeth—it was like being bitten by a live wire.

February 16<sup>th</sup>

Woke up at two in the morning, freezing, nauseous, and wound to snap. Swear to Gautama something was clawing at the door. Sniffing. Breathing words into the room. Sibilant, gassy words, heavy. Adam for all intents and purposes moved out the day before.

Lit up. Got back to sleep. Afraid of nothing, except irrationality of the universe, Jerry Falwell, and lupine phantoms that howl and teleport through misty dreamscapes, moons in the sky like blue-white fruit, two-dimensional trees that negate light. More to fear from Falwell.

February 18<sup>th</sup>

Female biology professors all have the same haircut: short, two different hues, shiny. They like to make multiple choices tests with ambiguous answers. And they don't like to admit they're wrong.

Napped beneath a tree older than God. Sun glowed warm over the world, and Spring had come early. It was an oak, tremendous and unpruned, looking very elderly and yet permanent. A hundred and forty years ago the heat had been so intense that the ground looked pockmarked with hidden geysers, and Confederate soldiers had marched barefoot and sweat-drenched and disappeared over the hill in the distance. Drummers perhaps, a flautist or two, doing their part to preserve their hypocritical *modus vivendi*. Creaking of cannons with tired wheels, maybe. The grass higher then, a wild wisp of the African savannahs across the sea.

Heat coming back. Ubiquity of green. Grass renewed. Smell of clippings



and lawnmower fumes in the background. Of course cut grass releases toxic gases into an already debilitated atmosphere; contributes to... ozone destruction or Greenhouse Effect or something. She's lying next to him, trying to crack the meaning of dream wolves using classical psychoanalysis.

Cute.

Breezy.

Lovely.

That night, or rather, early the next morning, Adam marched in carrying a green duffle bag, narrating why he and some blond were on the outs. Flicked light reveals unoccupied room, same old poster of an unshaved Kerouac on the wall, dull pulsing of Allman Brothers bass from Jack's stereo, peace signs on the glass, Rush Limbaugh glossy hung by seven ravaged darts on a bull's-eye. Brushed his teeth, closed the blinds, bed forever.

February 23<sup>d</sup>

Jack roped into social interaction on third floor of the Zeta's with a cast of a fat guy, his girlfriend, three frat boys, some guy he knew and another guy no one knew, one ugly girl, one less ugly girl, one fascinating mathematics major who talked too much, various random drunks and a few of his beatnik/hippy friends. Add acid (his), stir well. PH dropped and the walls bulged. It was like osmotic pressure, man. Could hear fucking gangs of rotten wolves howl in the parking lot, knocking over trashcans, vandalizing collegiate property, setting off car alarms. Bad trip. Bedspreads were cosmic, goldfish benevolent, and screensavers the machinations of the Devil himself.

Very peaceful walking back through the quad, net of dew on the grass, stars fading into stratus of violet and blue and lovely mauves that stretch the horizon. The sun, an unproven glow behind buildings to the East.

Room was dark, morning grays coming in through the blinds.

Laid overactive mind against inactive pillow. Deep guttural breaths coming from the top bunk, prelude to high wheezy snores. Jack's conscious pulsing on the membrane of sleep, then Adam mumbles something.

Clears his throat and says, "Jack, I'm a vampire." Jubilant giggling.

"Oh, shut up and die already."

And on the Seventh morning He created the idiots, which turned out so bad He took the rest of the day off. Of course He didn't take credit for it.

Sleep was heaven.

Vision #1 (a)



Erica B. Grace

Vision #1 (b)



Oil on Canvas



Self-portrait



Megan Scheminske

Oil on Canvas

Discovering

Little girl found  
a purple crayon  
in her New Picador Book.

Fat girl in front thought:  
*It's like a very old sweater.*

Boys in back smirked.

Little girl shifted  
her legs, the line  
between her calf and shin shone.

Nicole Guippone

On Testa's "Alexander the Great Rescued from the River Cydnus"

*During his campaign against Darius, Alexander halted at Tarsus to bathe in the Cydnus: "But hardly had he entered it when his limbs began to stiffen with a sudden chill, then he lost his color, and the vital warmth left almost his entire body. His attendants . . . carried him almost unconscious to his tent" (Quintus Curtius Rufus, History of Alexander III, V:1-4). To the left is the aged, shivering river god. To the right smoke rises from the fire set in Tarsus by Darius's retreating troops. The picture was painted shortly before Testa drowned in the Tiber, apparently a suicide.*

Text Accompanying the Painting, Metropolitan Museum of Art

I.

I, his soldier, saw it happen,  
When Alexander sank into the Cydnus mud.  
While Tarsus still burned, glowing on my face,  
Alexander turned cold and closed his eyes.  
We pulled him free in frenzy and with hot tears  
And some small, horrid river-beast  
Shook its shriveled body with laughter  
As Alexander shivered towards his death.

I was his soldier,  
He gave me purpose, a title, spears.  
I was a man when I was with him.  
He took me, fallow, and hewed me into  
His own sword. I looked on him  
And dreamed - with him, we all dreamed  
That he could, really - could he, really -  
Free us finally of uncertainty,  
Conquer the land and ebbing rivers,  
Master for us all the earth?

We took the land. Many cities burned,  
Cities that stank of sweat and earth,  
The sewer, midwifery, graveyards.  
Such cities must burn to build everlasting  
Alexandria on the purified ground.

And Darius fled and burned his city,  
The Persian knowing many tricks.  
Alexander's soldiers know no tricks,  
We know the honest work of swords.

The coward fled into the shifting desert,  
At home among all that is soon to pass.  
He has not seen our beautiful dream:  
Alexandria Eternal, where desert is made garden.  
Alexandria Eternal, where swords are laid to rest.

And if here, by Tarsus, he should die?  
Then I, too, shall meet and join the river.

II.

I, river god, saw it happen,  
When Alexander sank into the Cydnus mud.  
I, tied to this river and its maintenance  
And all the rounds of days and years,  
I, tending its ebb and flow,  
I held myself shivering as he shivered,  
I curled myself as he turned cold.

What could I feel for a human being?  
I, myself, do not know.  
I am no nectar-drinking Olympian.  
I wear no laurel crown, but I,  
A forgotten emissary in a forgotten province,  
I must receive their supplications.  
I must watch them wail on its banks  
When flood does not come or end when prayed for.  
I must tend to its floating cargo:  
Rebel slaves, unwanted births.  
I must receive their hoping souls  
And any last prayers for life's return.

And how they struggle! And, every time, fail!  
How eagerly they give themselves to any Prometheus!  
The promise of a child or a conqueror,  
How many must I pull from the Cydnus mud?

I have tired; I cheered Alexander on:  
"Take the city and dam this river,  
Forge for yourselves an eternal kingdom.  
Your power suffices to make it so."

The city burned, and the river seemed to know.  
It took him in with flowing, flowing.

I, river god, do curse this river.

III. (after Bob Lax)

I, river was river  
was was I was river  
was was I, was I was was  
river river river  
was I river was was I was  
river river river

IV.

I, Testa, have seen all this:  
Soldier and river and river god,  
Alexander sinking in the Cydnus mud.  
I have made and seen it all.  
I, Testa, to Tiber now go.

Justin Jennings

Good Friday, Miller's Creek



Beth Hurtt

Black and White Photograph

"Apprehension" and "Tense"

. . . the eyes stretched taut between two points.  
(The exact instant escapes, like a roach, into corners.)

A clenching, closing in; muscles shrink into  
a stillness untaught, known already at the place

and time where motion explodes the verb.  
Countless ghosts suggest, whisper, freeze the bones

when history's frame buckles. Strength, strained, snaps  
into three foreboding spaces, vacuum packed voids

of concrete wreckage, hard and fast in time and place. Still,  
understood abstractly, if at all, (as when foreign people die).

The eyes shift and reach, cannot grasp the mocking thing:  
winged prophetic moment, trailing smoke and mirrors,  
sneering at our pride.

John Harkey

Untitled



Annie Gedicks

Black and White Photograph



Shadowed Ideas



Chad Pugh

Digital Art



Le Chiave  
By  
Rachel Venuti

I'm explaining all this again to Peter on the plane ride over. He's heard it before.

"I get it," he says, "it's non-denominational. Like Unitarian."

"No," my mother-in-law opens her eyes but does not otherwise move, her seat perfectly reclined, the small red and white flame retardant blanket having only just been arranged to her liking. She stares straight ahead, "No, Peter. Congregational. Think about it, son, Lydia's from New England. You know, parishes, witch hunts, Plymouth Rock."

"So, it's old," he says, satisfied.

I wonder how old my husband has to be before his mother will stop calling him son. We're all of us headed to Italy. It's a honeymoon of sorts, although it's admittedly some sort of sick, bastardized honeymoon where the mother-in-law is invited and the wedding trip is to be conducted entirely within medieval stone walls built to the glory of God. This is fine with me, this is how things go. I figure I'll be indoctrinated in one fell swoop. I count my blessings that it's Maureen instead of Miriam and I don't have to spend hours soaking in a salt-water bath waiting to be reborn.

Peter leans over and takes my hand. If Baedeker were still in style, he'd be reading out loud, telling us about the way St. Francis' basilica gleams from the side of the mountain like a pink and white crown jewel. As it is, he shows me an article in the airline's magazine—"Write Your Own Vows". A do-it-yourself type wedding. He winks at me and pats my hand, making too big a deal out of it, orchestrating the moment clumsily. His fingers are like sausage, each one, and I can't bare their constant strumming and thumping. I order a Bloody Mary—it's morning somewhere.

"We could do that, you know," he says. This is the last thing on earth I want to do. "We could do that and maybe you'd feel better, maybe you'd feel more comfortable." My mother-in-law's eyebrow rises sharply. What we're doing, what we're really doing is planning the actual wedding. Maureen will conduct and the whole thing will come off beautifully, set against the backdrop of the Umbrian countryside. Admittedly, I am feeling some trepidation about this, but I want things to work out. Peter and I agreed to redo the wedding in style, to bring everyone together, to attempt to create a kind of spider's web of friends and family and well wishers to watch over us and care for our spiritual upbringing like a college roommate turned godmother. How these people, our unwilling guardians, will feel about this responsibility being thrust on them during their European vacation is another matter. But we agreed, let's face it, to satisfy his mother. I agreed in order to escape having to endure a lifetime of Maureen's own personal blend of purgatory for the uninitiated.

"I'm sure the priest doesn't need our help." This is all I am going to say. Take it for what you will, I think. Maureen nods and I wonder why she has to be so predictable, why I knew she would do just that. I responded for her sake, the least she can do is pretend we are not falling all over ourselves to please her. I mean, to me the Holy City is West Roxbury—I didn't need to come all this way to be one with the Catholic Faith. We're touching down at Marco Polo in Venice and training it to Assisi in the morning.

But first we have to take a L80,000 cab ride to our hotel. Mestre affords us one last chance at a good old American roadside motel-ish experience. Although it's only for the night, we stay in Mestre because we can't afford Venice—can't *abide Venezia* was what Peter's mother had actually said—neither of which was really true. The woman could have bought Ca' Dario from Woody Allen if she'd had the inclination. It's 12 midnight or six am and I'm still holding onto a moist towelette. We take turns talking to the driver and I realize my Italian is all but gone. Peter and I were here between our junior and senior year of college, backpacking like everyone else. I don't expect things to be as easy this time; I'm just looking for some glimmer of recognition, something that says I've been here before. We race over the bridge from the island and I fumble with what remains of my Italian phrase book, wondering if the root for *sinestra*, left, has anything to do with sinister. The driver and I exchange smiles, but I can't do much more than point to a map Maureen has handed me. I know I should be comfortable with this, but I'm not.

We over pay the driver as Maureen reads aloud a section on tipping from one of an endless stream of guidebooks. "I was wrong earlier, on the plane," I whisper to Peter and heft the dotted-line-yellow Oyster from the trunk. "This," I say, as the right-front wheel misses the edge of the sidewalk, "this is the last thing on earth I want to do."

After three days in Assisi, you begin to repeat restaurants. At Osteria Pozzo della Mensa Maureen says to me, "Lydia, last time we were here and you ordered the glass of merlot they practically filled it to the rim. They half emptied the bottle. Let's agree on one bottle for the three of us, and then we can pour our own." She glares at Peter's napkin as if to will it into his lap, "I mean, who ever heard of practically filling a wine glass." Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Peter orders the merlot for me and I finish off the bottle I started Monday. I never know what to do with the granulized honey compote, but I knife some onto a small piece of Pecorino and assume a confident air. Peter's ordered a pizza and I have to admire him. The man knows what he likes.

"I think we should take a walk after lunch and check out where the monks live. You know, Mom, it's not really a hike, we should all go."

"You two do your own, thing, son, that's fine. I bet you'd like to have some time alone together. Besides, it'll give me some time to work out the details of the wedding." It wasn't my idea, but thinking of it now, I suppose it's no joke trying to get 250 well-heeled family and friends up the side of Mont Subaso. Millions of people come to St. Frances' hometown every year without incident, but this fact does not faze Maureen's strategizing in the least. "All I know is, when your cousin Allison tried to have that wedding in Orvieto, it was a disaster. Peter, I don't think you even made it into town that day." It's true. Peter and I hid out that particular day at the farmhouse where all the guests had been relegated. The entire weekend we never once made it across the valley to the Etruscan's natural fortress. The night before the wedding, we'd broken into the stockpile of liquor the proprietor had grudgingly allowed Allison to bring from home. We were just getting up by the time the wedding party got back from the ceremony, every one so hot and tired from traversing mountain and plateau that the two of us blended in perfectly, sober or not.

I remember during the planning stages of that great event it had been my

responsibility to communicate with the owner of the farmhouses, to translate for Allison. He had only ordered half a bottle of wine per person and Allison was convinced it would never be enough. "È curioso, no?" he kept saying to me, seeking sympathy in someone who presumably understood not only the language but also the way. I'd felt conflicted at the time, understanding his embarrassment at having to order more wine, at having to deal with us, but understanding, too, that Allison's calculations were correct. Understanding her desire to have everything come off as planned, to start things off not only right, but perfect according to some design that involved flowers woven into her hair, some deep seeded dream that had been curated and protected since childhood. I'd understood her then, but known I'd never want that for myself, and yet here I am a year later a fixture in someone else's idea of the perfect wedding. Allison's one of those girls who always dreamed of a standing in the middle of a circle of guests holding hands, everyone shoeless. The groom's lavender shirt never did sit well with Maureen.

"Everyone is expecting another disaster," she says, folding her hands in her lap, as if that's what we deserved.

In one of his rare moments, Peter, leans forward in his chair and hisses at his mother. "Mom, that is exactly why we had a small wedding to begin with."

"You really have no idea why we're here, do you."

We end up all of us separating after lunch. Peter, probably glad to be rid of us both for a while, goes off to hunt the brothers, and I imagine Maureen wearing a cloak and having her head shaven into the doughnut in an incense filled barber shop. She was right, damnit all, about the wine and I head back to the Lieto Sogiorno for a small nap. The stone steps to the bed and breakfast lead directly off the Piazza del Comune and I feel someone in a Tilly Endurable staring after me. I reach through the iron gate to let myself in this door that can only be locked from the inside and I step over the threshold. Picking out mine and Peter's key from the pile on the windowsill, I realize how dangerous this all is. I mean, doesn't the woman who owns this place have an extra set of keys to all these rooms? Why does she require us to leave them out on the sill for everyone to see? If, as she claims, it's because she wants to know when we're out of the room so it can be cleaned, then maybe I should suggest to her that she employ the same tactic she uses in the morning to get us out of bed and down to breakfast at a reasonable hour, namely standing outside the door, breathing heavily, huffing and puffing and then loudly knocking and murmuring some unintelligible Umbrian curse. It works fine since Peter and I are never sure if it's the proprietress or his mother out there in the hall cursing our very existence.

As it is, I realize anyone in the place could do just what I'm about to do. This is the real danger of the key in the hallway. If there's no one home, why not let myself in? The numbers, branded and charred into a wooden knob like the handle of a carving tool, acting as a key fob, stare up at me, signaling absence all over the bed and breakfast. I'm tempted and Our Lady of the Lieto Sogiorno is nowhere to be seen. Presumably, she's captivated by the blaring of the Italian-dubbed episode of Little House on the Prairie coming from the breakfast room off the front hallway. Does she know Michael Landon is dead? Does she know how we mourned him and People dragged him through the mud? Does she know who we offer up, what we do to our heroes?

I pitch forwards lightly as I take the stairs, doing my best not to slip on the



well-worn marble. Between these steps and the crazy free form shower it's a challenge to keep my teeth. Sneaking into Maureen's room is easy enough although I have to admit I'm not sure what I'm looking for. I consider her hairbrush as a tool of self-flagellation, playing with the things on her dressing table. She's brought a candle from Lourdes of all places and I can't decide why the hell she picked Assisi over the other pilgrimage sites she and her bridge partners frequent. We didn't discuss the location of my conversion; I never even offered a suggestion. Why not somewhere I'd been before, why not Venice or Rome or some place that could accommodate all these people we'd invited? There's no great museum here, nothing to see except some frescoes of dubious origin and the usual sprinkle of Imperial remains. Nothing to do but take photos and burn things and spend the heat of the day hiding out in the crypt.

The small candle is still in its unused, shrink wrapped state, the Madonna hovering above the Grotto, above the valley, casting a gold bordered yellow pallor over half the candle. The other side is plain. If I'd been a Congregationalist of the old order I'd have an active contempt for this type of thing, but as it is, I'm just unmoved. I don't care if Maureen needs both a symbol and an intermediary to get to that place in her heart, but how can this be the difference between us? I want to tell her I don't care, I don't mind, that this is fine with me and I won't object if the kids are brought up Catholic. There aren't any kids, of course, but I suppose that's the point, the problem. She must think I'll take a stand of some kind, that I'll object or kidnap them from school on Yom Kippur so they can be well rounded. She must take me for some kind of humanist who thinks it's all fine, it's all right. To each his own. And maybe I do, maybe the fact that I don't mind means that it is all right in the end. How did my WASP-y New England upbringing bring me to this, this state of uncaring? Is this what contempt for zeal ultimately comes to? The room is slightly sunken, three steps down, and when I sit on the edge of the bed I'm looking at the place where the door ends and the floor begins and just as I notice this, there she is. "Of course, of-fucking course," I go ahead and say it out loud to seal my fate.

Maureen sits next to me on the bed and stares straight ahead. "You know, I used to find that refreshing. It was one of the first things I noticed about you when Peter brought you out to the house." She's talking about the swearing. I don't say anything. "I was ironing, do you remember?" I do and nod. "And I burned my finger and let loose a stream of epithets. 'GD! GD! GD!' I must've said it nine times before you appeared, leaning on the doorframe and you said, 'Why don't you just say it one good time.'" This is true, but I can't think now what could have made me so bold. "And I did it, too," she said, "I did it your way that time, Lydia. But not this time." She takes my hand in hers and looks me right in the eye. "It's for your own good, yours and Peter's. You'll see." Maureen stands up so I do, too. I'm not sure what comes next, but I feel like I've escaped a lengthy apology and explanation, so I hug this woman, my mother-in-law, my future mother-in-law. A short excuse about packing for Allison's and I'm back out in the darkened hall where I belong.

"I think you and Allison planned this whole thing so you could get away from me," Peter says, pulling me onto his lap for one more kiss. I glare at him, mentally transmitting the one line retort. His cousin is in Siena, taking a cooking class at one of those Instituto per Stranieri and Maureen arranged for the two of

us to have a pow wow. Probably she expects Allison to divulge some grandiose secret, some sage advice she wishes she'd known way back when. What this tells me is Maureen knows she can't be trusted.

Peter has me take the Oyster so I won't have to bother with keys. It's only supposed to be for two nights, but I fill up the thing up anyway, tossing in book after book until it's too heavy for me to lift. I leave one slim book out to read on the train. Allison's agreed to take up my dress for me, so I cram the wedding gown on top of it all and roll the combination. We wheel it though the corridor and down the stairs I'd snuck up hours before. At Piazza del Comune I convince Peter that I can make it down to Santa Maria delgi Angeli on my own, and we part at the unimpressive fountain teeming with children and couples looking for a good backdrop for a photo. The family posed around the font. I watch my husband walk away over ancient cobble stone and wonder how I'll ever lift this damned suitcase onto the mini-bus when it arrives, how I'll make the change for Siena at Florence, why I didn't just have Allison meet me in Florence to being with. I go into the tabbachi to purchase the L1,500 bus ticket and engage in conversation with the surly woman who sits in front of an enormous old calculator, punching away. She tells me about the piscina, the swimming pool where her daughter works selling tickets and bathing caps. Red for the boys, white for the girls. Intuitively I know this is not the pool/nightclub in Perugia our waiters at Osteria Pozzo della Mensa keep telling Peter and me about. I picture, though, a bar filled with tinkering glasses, everyone identifiable and separable by gender based on the color of their rubber heads. I hardly notice when the bus pulls up by the fountain. What gets me is that someone's stolen the suitcase, a blur of yellow plastic mixed with the outline of a body rushes by the open door and careens down the hill as I stand and watch. My body is cool for the first time since we've been in Assisi, a sick frozen feeling spreading through my abdomen. I should run after this person, I should run across the piazza to our hotel, I should cry or something, but I don't even start. What I do instead is leave my copy of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* on top of the enormous old calculator and walk out the door.

I turn left and enter the very next door I come to, a small hotel I hadn't noticed the entire week. There's no one at the counter, no guest at the lobby. A porter meets me, but I have nothing for him. All I'm left with is my money belt and of course I'm wearing a goddamned dress. As I raise the irritatingly perfect Ex-Officio black cotton over my waist, I realize the porter is staring at me. He's just a young, carbuncled boy with either hotel management in his future or absolutely no intention of remaining in Assisi one day beyond his eighteenth birthday. His nametag says Luka. I burst into tears.

We fuck for a number of hours, I don't count. In between we smoke wicked tiny cigarettes from an automatic tabacchi machine and try to talk. The muscles in my cheeks ache from sucking so hard on the toy cigarettes, trying to get something that's not there. And from the talking. I'm comfortably speaking Italian sober for the first time in my life and I tell Luka everything. "Cara mia" he says in an attempt at condescension and puts his knuckle under my chin. He spews facts about Assisi in bad English. "The great earthquake came in 1997." "The lovely frescoes are painted by the master Giotto." "San Francesco slept on a pillow made of stone." Things like that.

In the morning I sit at the bar in the lobby and Luka makes me café macchiato. There really is no one else here, save his father who glares at me as I



spoon too much sugar into the demitasse. He's only the night porter and he has school. When I have finished, I jump down from the stool and take Luka's hand. "Walk me to the basilica," I say.

We dodge Piazza del Comune by climbing above it. We weave through residential streets and scaffolding, taking turns leading as we get higher. Peter took pictures of me up here three days ago, buying flowers for me to hold, to put in my hair, and I'd put one in between my teeth, laughing. I realize now why he hadn't picked them instead. They might just as well have been plastic. This is a kind of Disneyland to Peter, like vacation with mother to a young boy. Don't walk on the grass. O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek.... I can see the Hill of Hell after a while and now it's only a matter of working our way back down. Nothing's open, it's too early for shopping and gelati, so Luka pushes me up against every storefront he can to kiss me in a hard, urgent way. I don't mind, knowing this is the body I will slough off.

I leave him at the entrance to the lower church. "Thank you," I say.

"Ci vediamo," he says.

"Ci vediamo presto," I say, even though we both know it is a lie.

By noon I have been in the crypt for five hours. I've been exposed from minute one for the way I attempted to cross myself before taking this pew. My constant companion is this willful monk sitting across the narrow aisle, also alone in a pew. He ruins his eyes by reading, defying the darkness of the crypt. Who the hell does he think is going to read to him when his own eyes give out? Where is his Clare? What light there is does not flicker, the crypt doesn't move. The willful monk imitates this unmoving, sits perfectly still now, a white tuft of hair sticking up in the back. If these candles are electric, what happens to all the candles piled up in offering? Are the flowers fake, too? There is a definite sweet smell to this place, but I don't see any incense. Is it decay? Everything is smooth stone, not like San Zaccharia's sweating glass box, his personal monstrosity. Nothing's visible. The monk is being obstinate again, reading again. Now we find out the frescoes aren't by Giotto after all. What do we do with that? I can't take it anymore and leave my seat for a moment. I have nothing to leave behind. I approach the tomb of San Ruffino, opposite the main altar. There's a grate behind the crypt, a lit candle hanging from the ceiling. I blow on it. A monk writing receipts for donations smiles at me. And just like that I'm able to let go, different from pretending not to care, I let go of the inconsistencies and contradictions. The flame didn't move when I blew on it, but then again I didn't need to blow on it. I lost the sitting contest with the monk for a reason, but I can still pray. By now I've learned, and I cross myself again as I take back my pew.

"Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is discord, unity. Where there is doubt, faith." Here I am joined by another voice, the pew smaller for Maureen's pashima'd body. "Where there is error, truth. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is sadness, joy. Where there is darkness, light."

A toddler breaks away from her mother and goes after the pile of candles on the ledge of the altar. There are not thick and she easily snaps one in half, the wick acting as the unifier, the protector of this body. Maureen takes the prayer card from me and for the first time I am content to follow her lead, my words like a poor dub job.

"O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console. To be understood as to understand. To be loved, as to love. For, it is in giving that we receive. It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. It is in dying that we are born to eternal life." She slides out of the hard bench, kneels on one knee and crosses herself as she rises to leave. My mother-in-law kisses me lightly on the lips and presses a set of keys into my palm. I accept them. "You should go," she says, and I know she's right. I know now that Peter won't be made to understand, that this is what Maureen had planned on all along, that this, this is what we're really doing here.

### The Lure of the Throng

After the throng,  
when the pulses backward-heave rhythmically,  
    pounding the locomotives hurling themselves into the station  
    churning, puffing, in deceleration  
when out flung-down masks clank on kitchen tiles  
we relieve our imprisoned feet -  
stretching toes crackling with pleasure . . .

After we quit that office-odored throng,  
fluorescent lights,  
that god-awful nagging lady who saw . . .  
and not to offend you but . . .  
and Mr. caught Ms. with . . .  
and Oh! by the way you shouldn't . . . la la la la la

We welcome the terry carpet, the silence, the sigh,  
    and rustle the newspaper in our laughing hands,  
    mocking, with the ruffle-Pop! of opening articles.  
    those still muddled in the multitude...  
    We have escaped!

Safe in our armchair, we acquiesce . . .  
And rejoin, in black ink and headlines, the human race

Julia Roberts

Prayerbeads



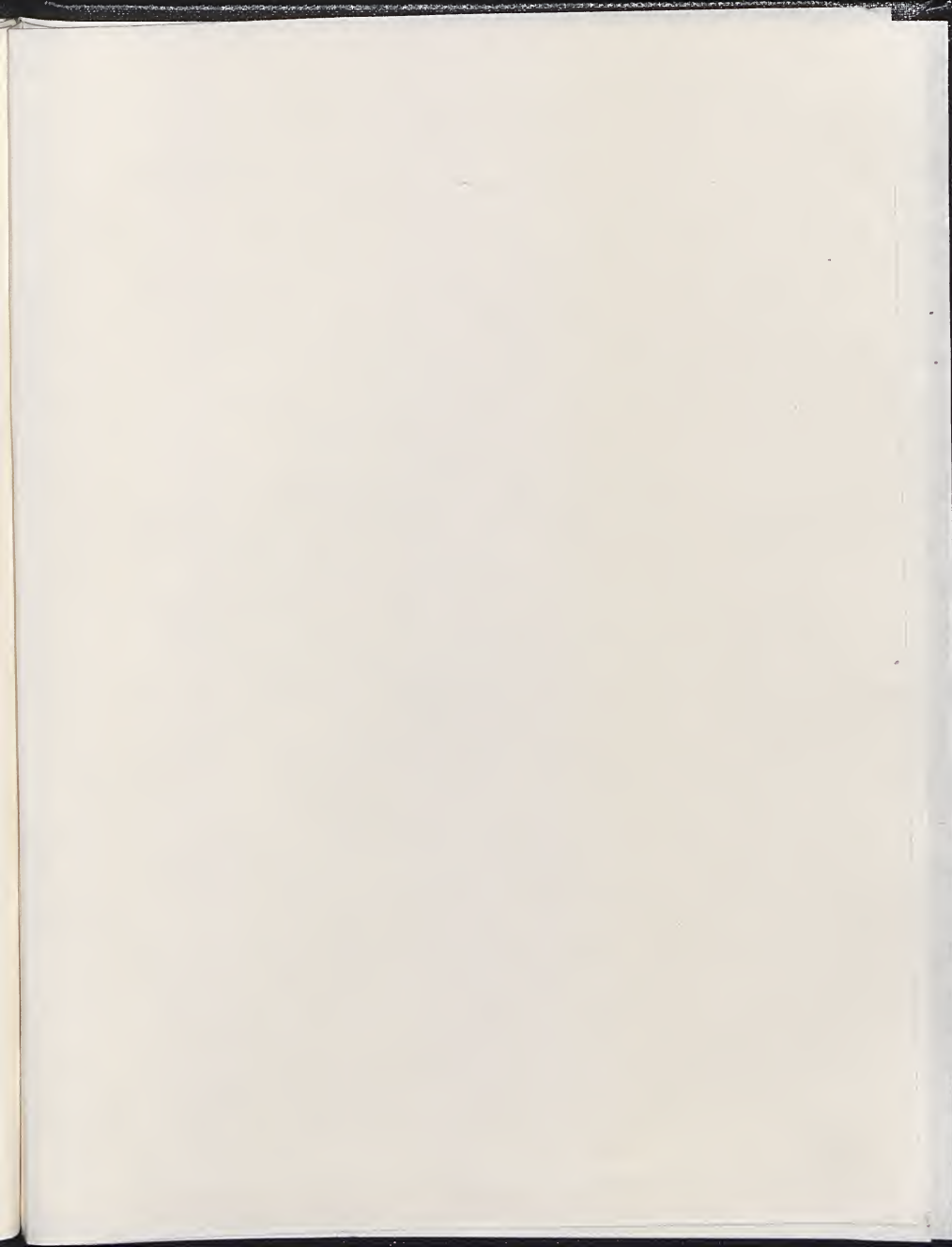
Bo Bergman

Black and White Photograph

**Three  
to  
Four  
Ounces**

**Spring 2002**

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There  
is  
no  
further  
work

